THE 10TH SUMMER OF CRACK: A SPECIAL REPORT (PART TWO)

THE SOURCE

THE MAGAZINE OF HIP-HOP MUSIC, CULTURE & POLITICS

flavor flav

JOKER OR GENIUS ?

RAP RADIO WAKES UP

15 NEW SNEAKERS SET THE TRENDS

KRS-ONE & FAT JOE BOMB THE BRONX

AUGUST 1994 • NO. 59
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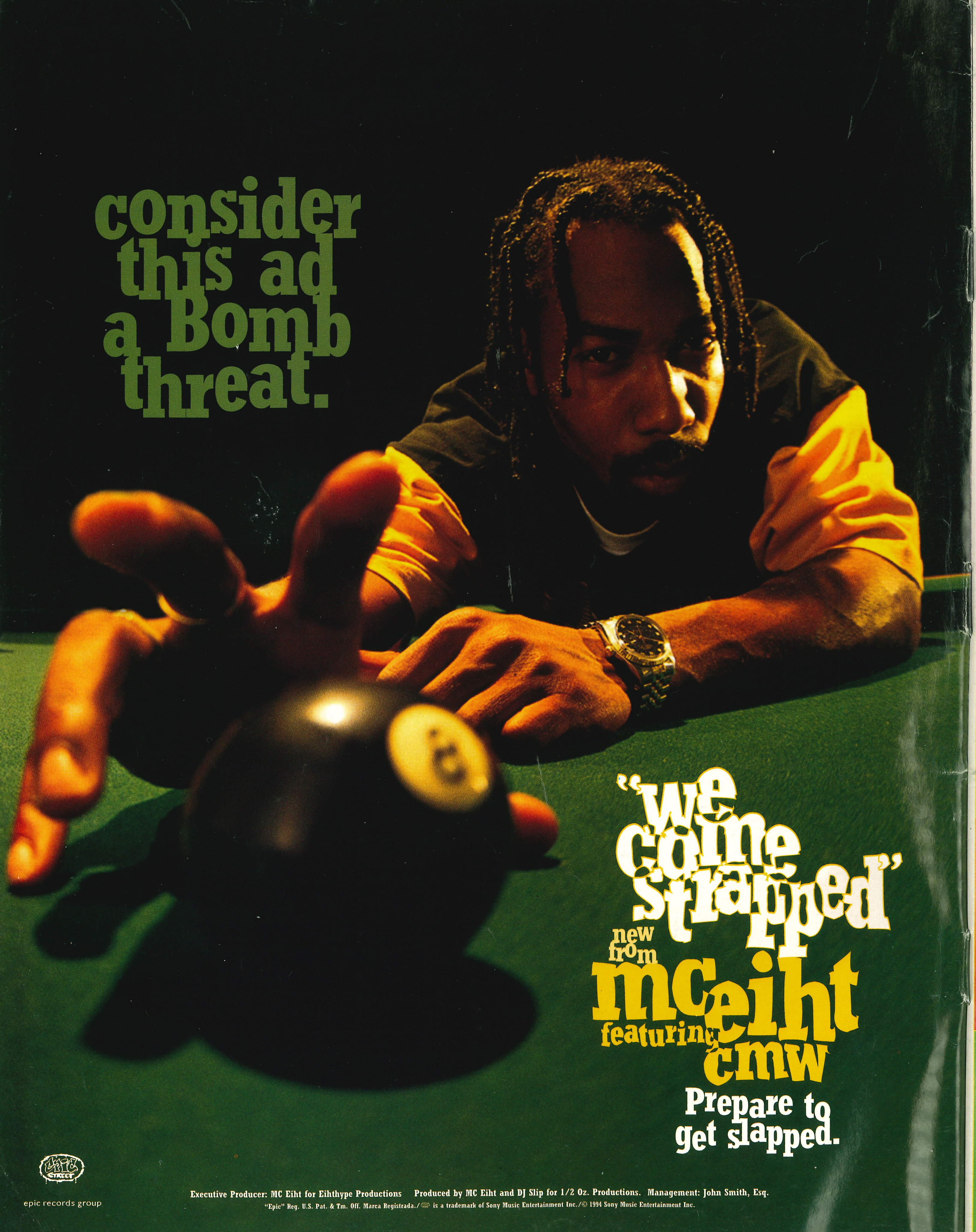
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mceiht
featuring cmw
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epic STREET
epic records group

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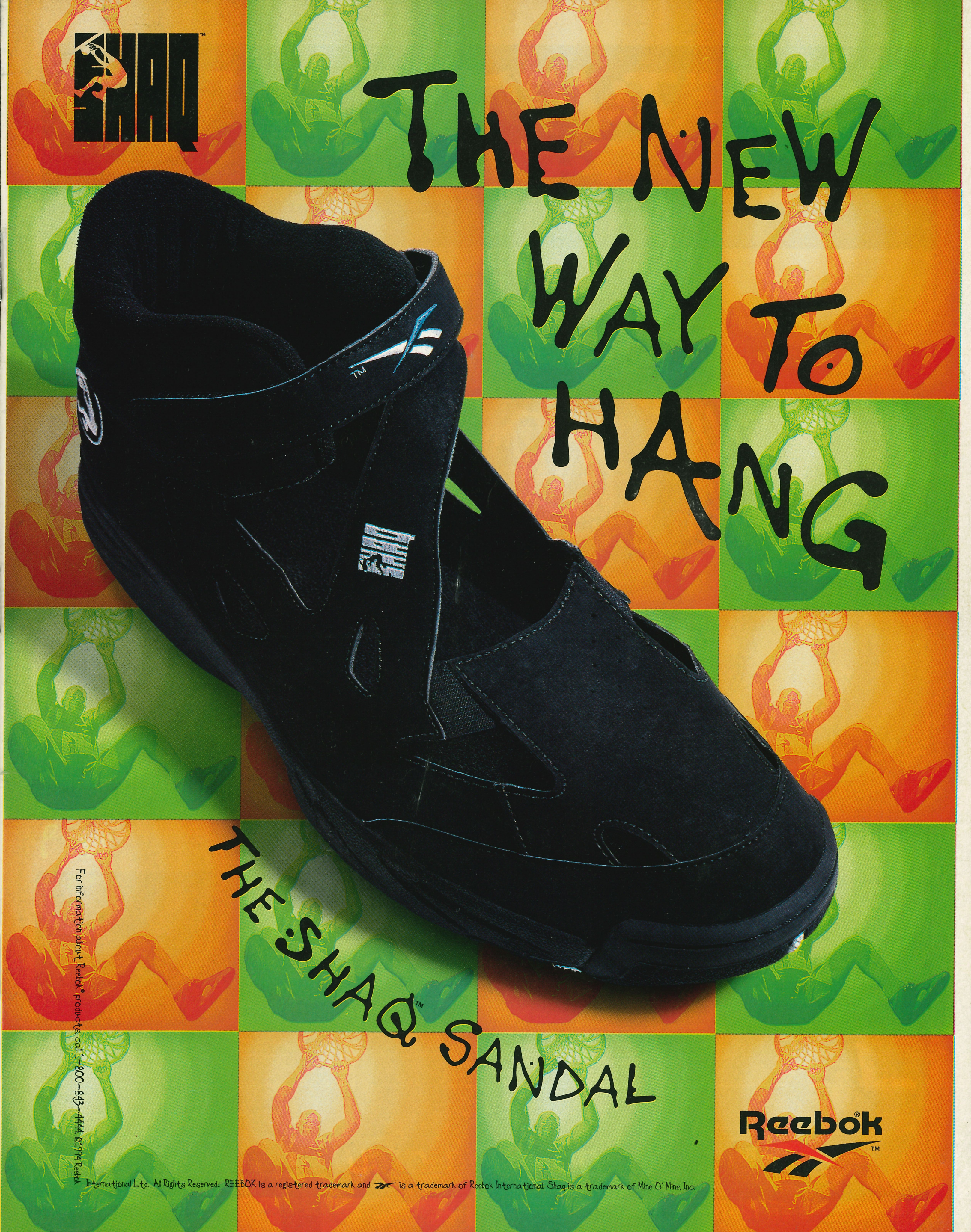
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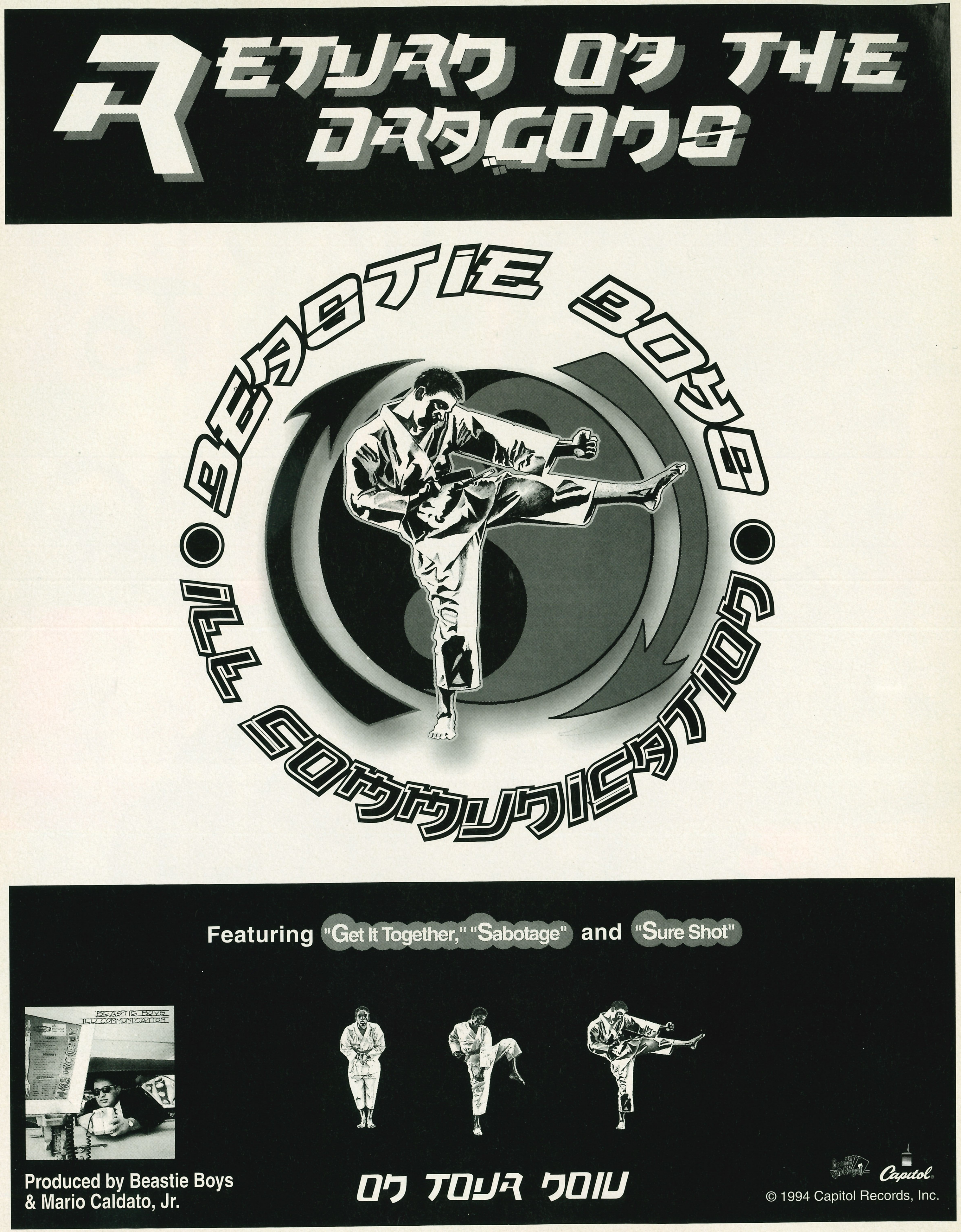

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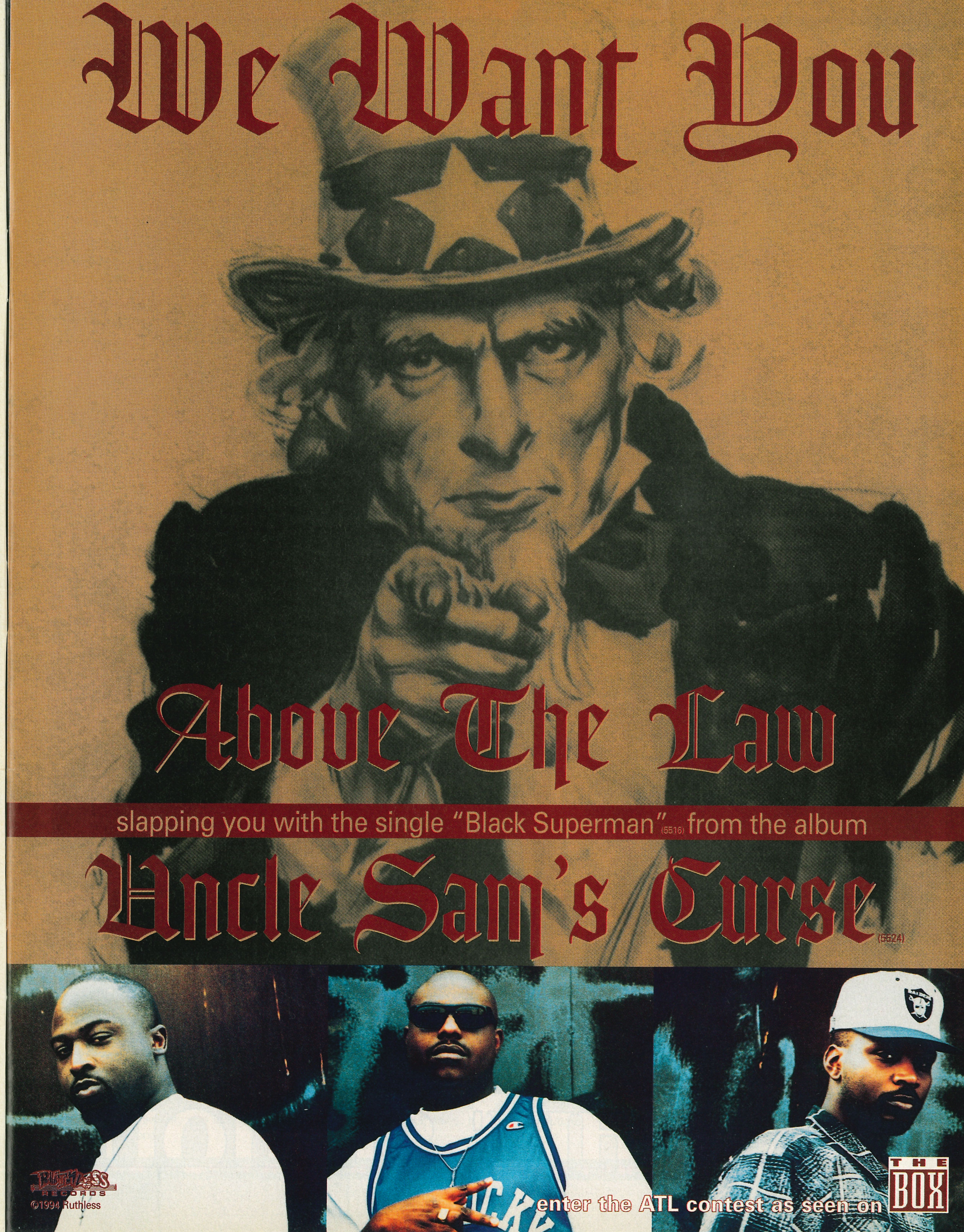

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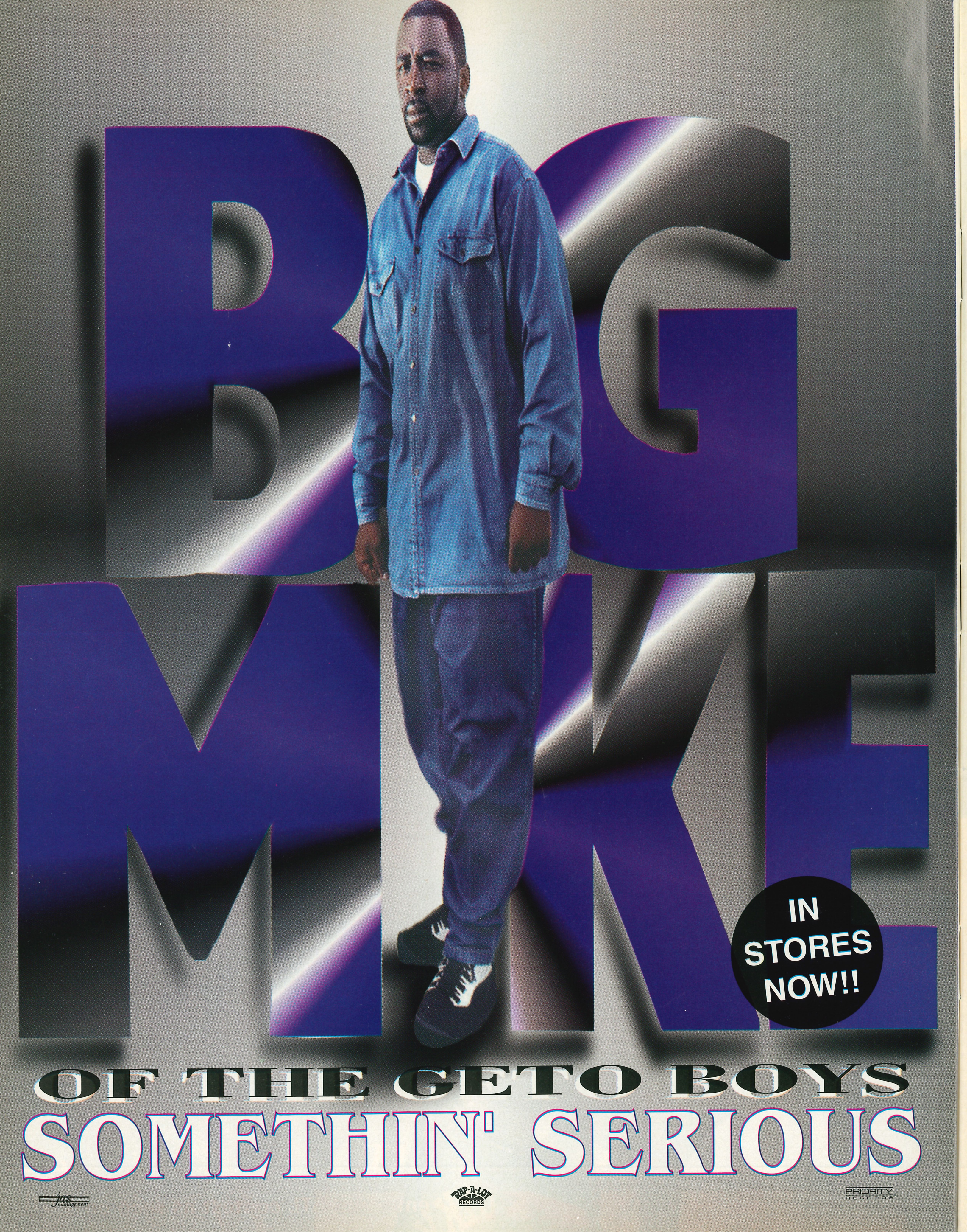

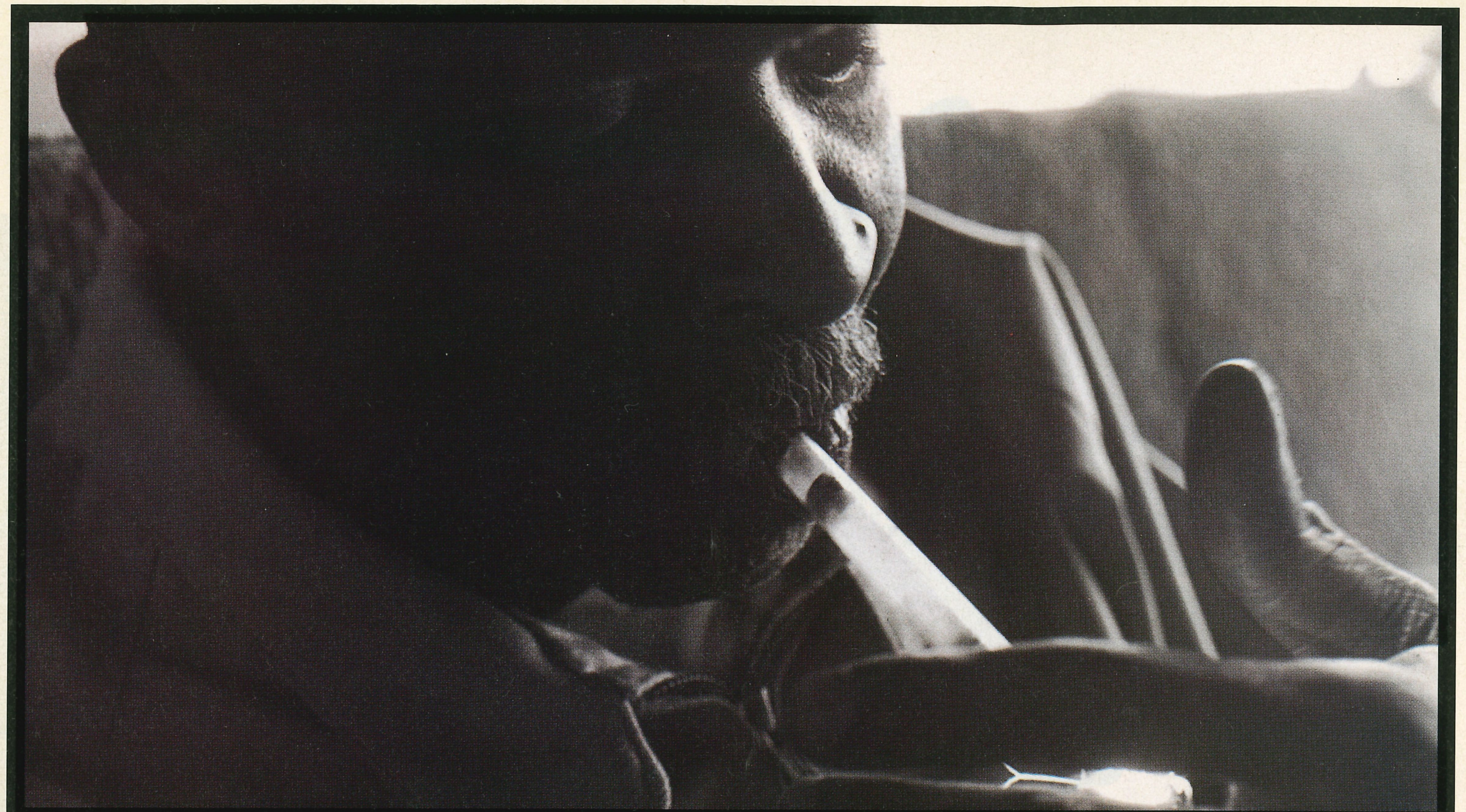

THE SOURCE
THE MAGAZINE OF HIP-HOP MUSIC, CULTURE & POLITICS

AUGUST

FEATURES

42 RAP ON THE RADIO
"Radioactive"

Hold on a sec. Is that Jeru The Damaja's new cut on the radio? At 9:30 in the morning? Believe it: a new breed of radio stations across the country is embracing hip-hop music and gaining listeners. Senior Contributor Pistol Pete listens to the wave of rap-friendly radio and finds harmony where there once was static.

50 GRAF MISSION WITH KRS-ONE AND FAT JOE
"Bronx Bombers"

Thirty cans of Rustoleum, a couple of graf legends and two MCs who live for the smell of fresh paint. Graf correspondent Chino rolls to the Boogie-Down on a bona fide bombing mission, and nothing's gonna stop this piece. Plus, Bönz Malone talks with two graf addicts from the wrong side of the tracks, Newark-based MCs Artifacts.

56 THE TENTH SUMMER OF CRACK
"On The Rocks: Part Two"

This month, we continue our look back at the first ten years of the crack cocaine epidemic. We kick things off by awarding the "Golden Scale Award" to the fattest appearance by cocaine (either rock or powered) in the history of American film (page 58). In the second installment of "Cracker: Diary of a White Basehead" (page 60), Zak Davidson details how his love affair with the pipe led him to a life of crime and, later, into rehab. In "Cocaine's Certified Public Accountant" (page 64), Martha Honey scores an exclusive interview with Ramon Milian-Rodriguez, who was the chief money-launderer for Pablo Escobar, Colombia's biggest cocaine kingpin. In "Putting Morals Aside" (page 70), Assistant Editor Shawnee Smith speaks with Terrol Spruell, a student at Virginia State University who is now doing a thirty year bid for crack sales. It was his first offense.

74 FLAVOR FLAV
"The Resurrection of the Jester King"

Easily one of the most recognizable celebrities in the Hip-Hop Nation, Flav is also one of the least understood. Sure, you know about the clock, you've tried to make heads or tails out of "Cold Lampin' With Flavor," and maybe you've even attempted to do his little dance (in private, we hope). It's been all too easy to see Flavor Flav as a friendly clown, a jester in Chuck D's court. That is, until his arrest last November for assault with a deadly weapon amid accusations of drug abuse. Now, for the first time ever, Flav talks openly and honestly about the burden of being both Flavor Flav and William Drayton III. Associate Editor Rob Marriott is there to report yet another SOURCE exclusive.

82 A CONVERSATION WITH CHUCK D AND HARRY ALLEN
"Back To The Future"

Public Enemy's head honcho and the self-proclaimed "Hip-Hop Activist and Media Assassin" talk with Music Editor Reginald C. Dennis and Editor-In-Chief James Bernard about P.E.'s past and hip-hop's future.

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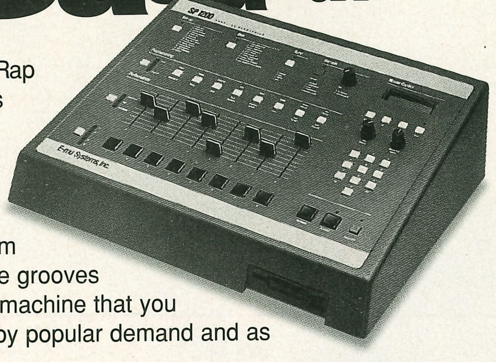
COVER AND CONTENTS PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHI MODU/C²

It's baaaacK... and it's Baaaad.



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We at The Source take very seriously the challenge of being the only independent voice for the Hip-Hop Nation. We strive hard to bring the reader a complete and unbiased representation of this incredible art form and all that surrounds it. With this in mind, we feel that it is important for our readers to be aware of the nature of our relationships with the rap industry.

We engage in business transactions with companies that are part of the rap music industry on two basic levels. Obviously, we accept advertising from such companies. Secondly, we at times are contracted by record companies to aid in the promotion of their product outside the direct channels of the magazine.

With respect to any of our business relationships, we feel it is our responsibility always to strictly police the integrity of our editorial content. Only in this way can we continue to bring to you the clear and unbiased coverage which we hope has won the respect of all of our readers.

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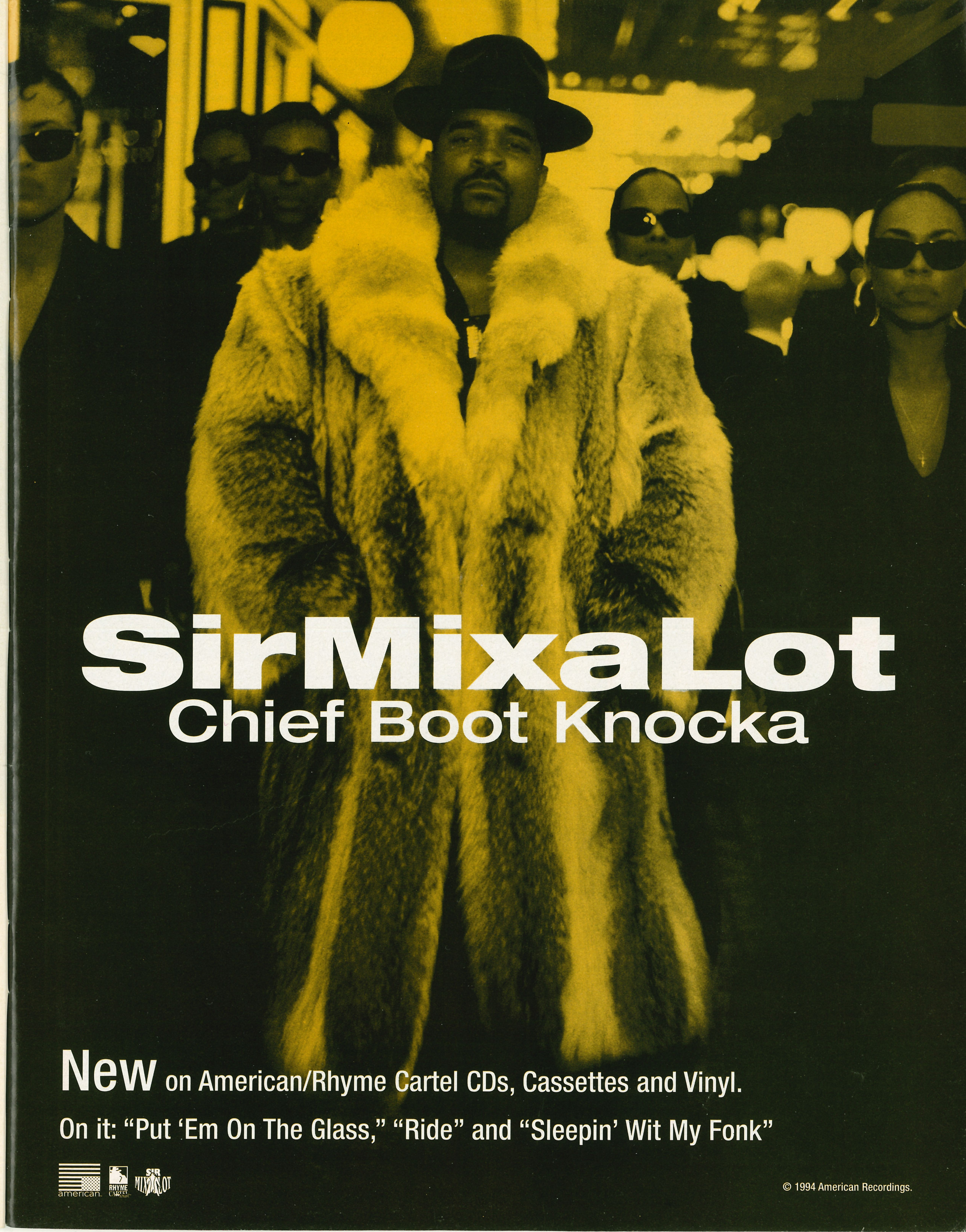
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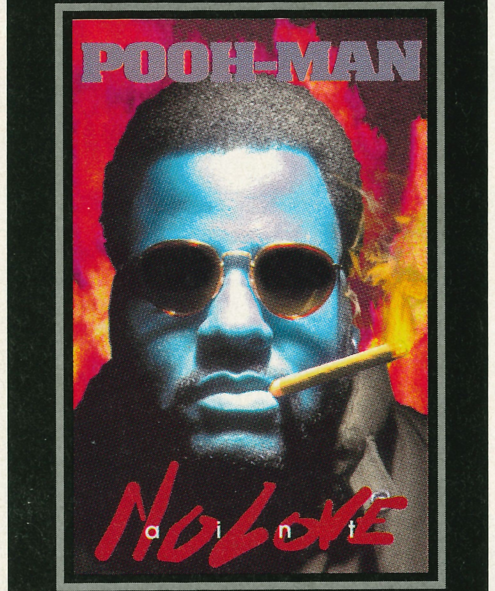

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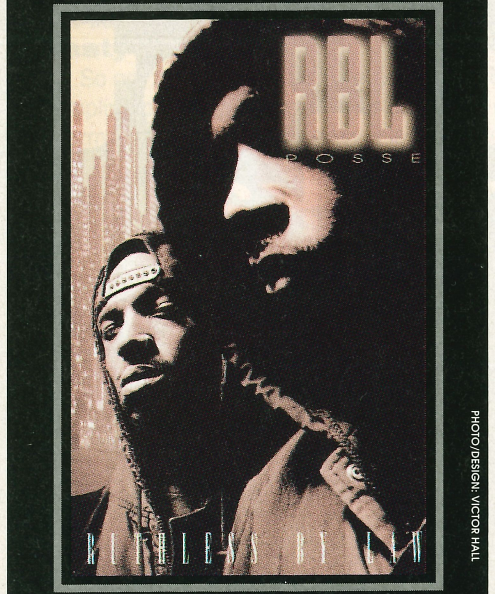

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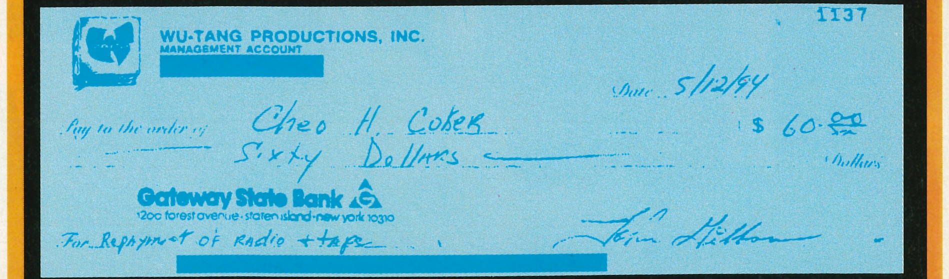
EDITORIAL

SHAME ON A NIGGA?



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AFTER MASTER KILLA GRABBED CHEO'S TAPE RECORDER, WU-TANG'S MANAGEMENT TRIED TO MAKE UP FOR IT WITH A SMALL OFFERING

Bap! The sound of Master Killa's fist impacting against the left side of my face was so loud, the entire hip-hop industry heard about it.

On May 12, while attempting to interview Prince Rakeem and The Genius for a piece I was writing on Staten Island rap in *Mouth II Mouth* magazine, I was physically assaulted and had my tape recorder stolen by Master Killa—an upstart member of the Wu-Tang clique. The reason? The two heads of the Clan didn't appreciate artwork that accompanied a profile I had written on the group six months earlier for *Rappages* that, in their words, "made them look like faggots."

"Your name was on it, so we blamed you," said the Genius a few seconds after I got punched, easing back in the car seat from where he watched the whole thing go down. Prince Rakeem's only question, as he stood next to Master Killa before and after he hit me, was, "How come Nas got the cover of that shit and we didn't?" I tried to explain to them that, as a freelance writer, I had no control over the images in the magazine, especially since I wasn't the art director and I lived 400 miles away from the Beverly Hills offices. They didn't seem concerned.

Within the two-week period that it took to finally receive a formal apology from Master Killa and Wu-Tang's management, shit went haywire. Rumors started coming back to me, most of the time wrongfully accusing Ghostface Killa of being one of those who assaulted me, not Master. The press swarmed in like vultures, everyone waiting for both sides to proclaim all-out war on the other, hungry for the juicy quote. The mainstream loved the fact that it went down, because, in their eyes, it only confirmed all of the negative aspects of hardcore rap we hip-hop writers spend our time trying to prove wrong.

While I'm writing this, I sit here listening to the Wu-Tang Clan's album frustrated. The shit is brilliant. I would much rather have written an article about how they were trying to elevate this art form we love and improve a violence-filled situation, instead of having to spend most of my time writing about something that could have easily been avoided. But the buck has to stop somewhere.

When Master Killa and I talked, he said "Everyone was saying you did it, and I didn't even think about it when I saw you." All that it would have taken is for someone to explain to them that yes, the artwork was wack (the writer would probably agree with that), but people are going to pay more attention to the story than the artwork. By hitting a writer, they make themselves look like caricatures, not intelligent, forthright artists who grew up in a fucked up situation and are trying to use art as a means of transcending it.

At some point, we need to sit down as Black men and come to a complete resolution to this situation. No one's saying that you got to be "cleaner than a bar of soap," but there's nothing wrong with having some class to your shit. As an industry, we've got to stop continually proving to the world that we so-called niggas can't handle ourselves when it comes to business. There has never been, in the history of Black music, so many young Black people representing so many different sides of the music industry. There's no need to let violence destroy that.

CHEO H. COKER

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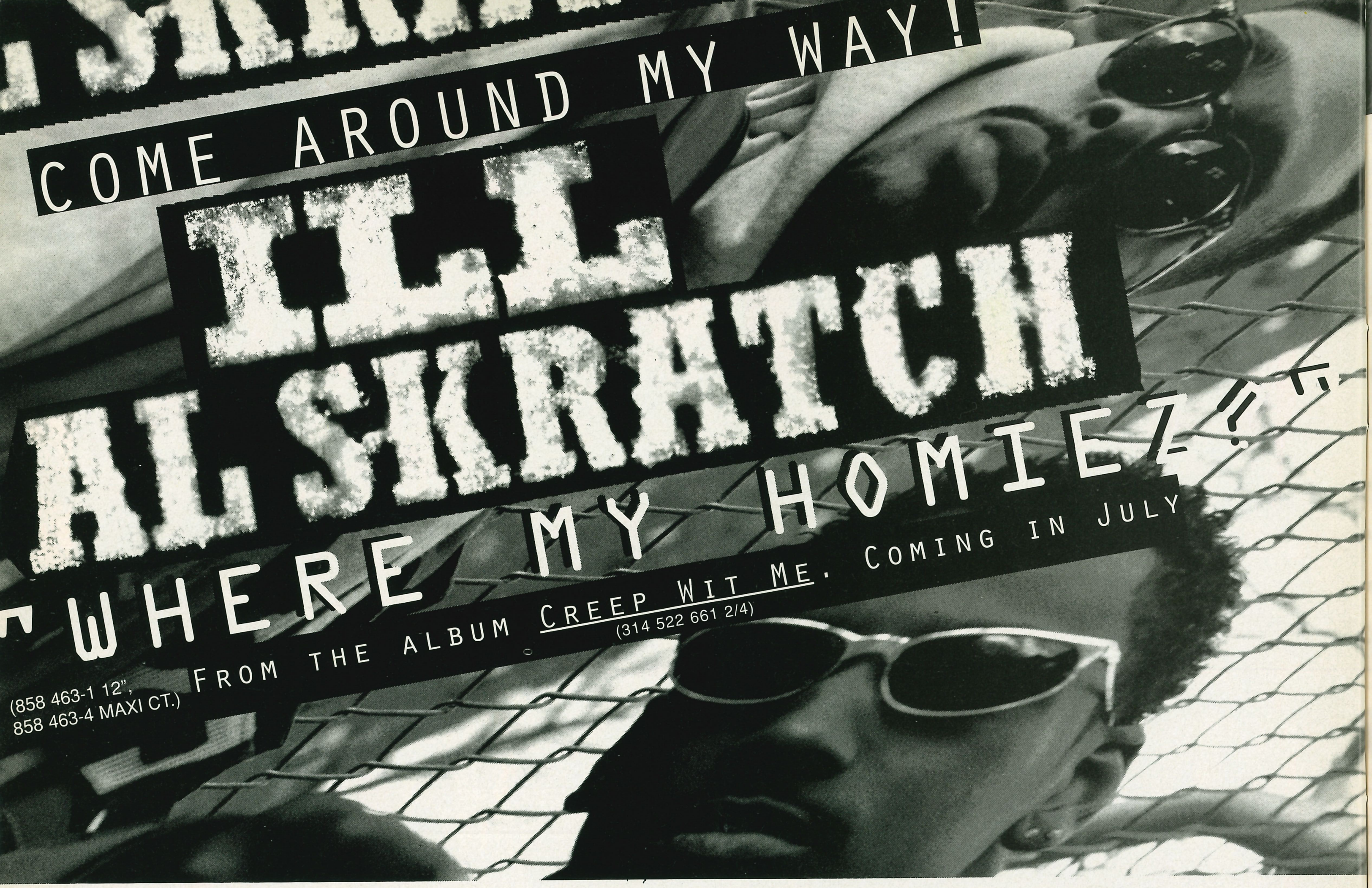
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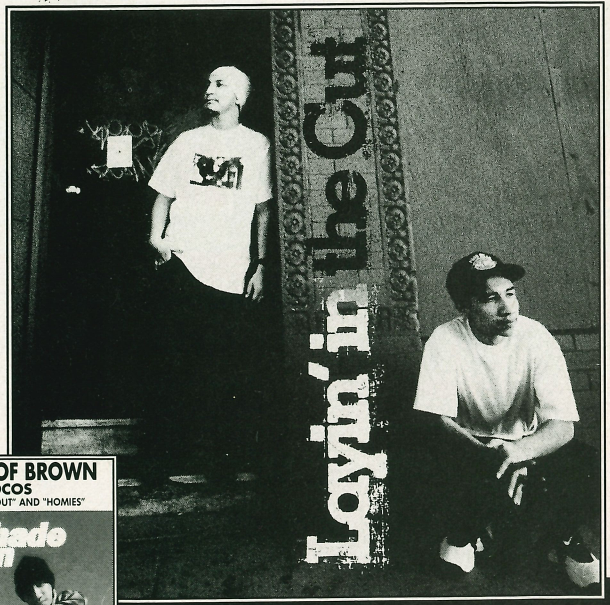
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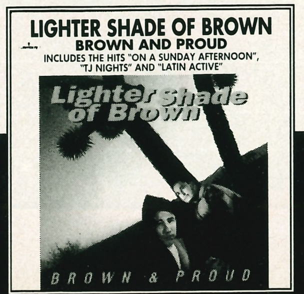
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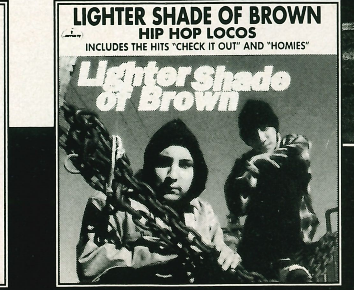
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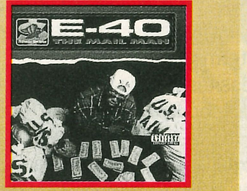
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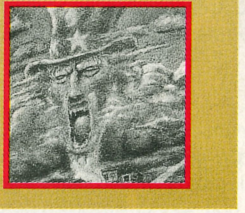

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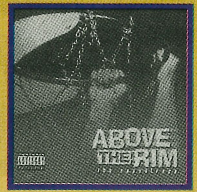
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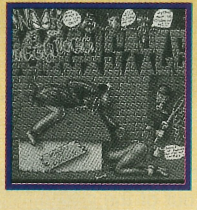

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Beatnuts
Violator/Relativity

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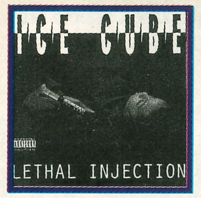
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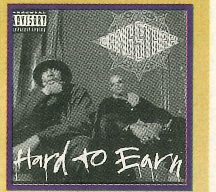
GANGSTARR
Hard To Earn
Chrysalis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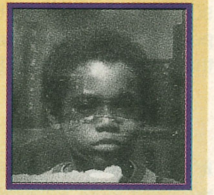

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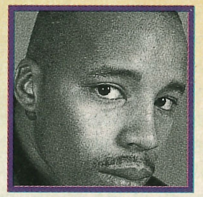

SHYHEIM
AKA The Rugged Child
Virgin

singles file

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Giant

WHERE MY HOMIEZ
Ill Al Skratch
Mercury

CODE OF THE STREETS
GangStarr
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Mad Lion
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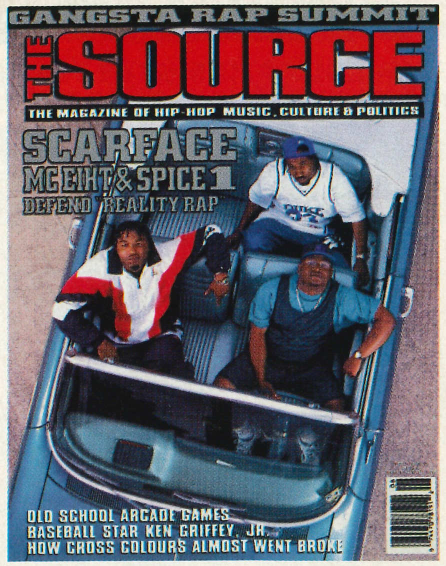
King Just
Black Fist

DISTORTION TO STATIC
The Roots
Geffen

FLAVA IN YA EAR
Craig Mack
Bad Boy/Arista

US VS. GANGSTA RAP


GANGSTA RAP SUMMIT
THE SOURCE
THE MAGAZINE OF HIP-HOP MUSIC, CULTURE & POLITICS
SCARFACE
MC EIHT & SPICE 1
DEFEND "REALITY RAP"
OLD SCHOOL ARCADE GAMES
BASEBALL STAR KEN GRIFFEY, JR.
HOW CROSS COLOURS ALMOST WENT BROKE

Doesn't Congress have anything better to do? ["Caught Up in the (Gangsta) Rapture," by Kierna Mayo Dawsey, June '94/"Impaired Hearing," by Dimitry Leger, May '94] There seems to be a trend among Congress and various "activists" toward blaming the entertainment industry for society's ills. What these people (C. Delores Tucker, Tipper Gore) fail to realize is that music, TV and movies reflect life, not dictate it. Parents should be their children's censor ratings board. Congress should stop wasting taxpayers's money by holding subcommittees on rap music and focus on the subjects the rappers are talking about: racism, poverty, unemployment, police brutality and so on.

The 69 King
Greenburgh, NY

A "three-strikes-and-you're-in-prison for life" law is being designed for us, and President Clinton wants laws designed just for Blacks living in the projects. And what will Rev. Jesse Jackson and other Black Civil Rights leaders do about this? They will caucus 100 times, hold 500 seminars and give 1,000 speeches denouncing rap. Face it, Rev. JJ, Sen. Carol Moseley Braun, Rev. Al, Rev. Calvin, The Congressional Black Caucus, the NAACP and the Urban League are about something altogether different than the Hip-Hop Nation. It's time for young Black people to start establishing their own organizations if they want to save themselves and future Black generations.

Myrna Brooks
Harlem, NY

It's one thing for white people to be talking mess, but Blacks! Rap has been the main route for Blacks to make money and rise up and out of the ghetto. If there are Blacks who disagree with the content of the music, they can present their arguments in a fashion other than in the media. I totally disagree with Black against Black, whether it involves gangs or political leaders. I'll agree that the lyrics of rap music are not always suitable for all listeners and some do stress explicit and violent activity, but how can they speak about positive aspects of life when they all live in hell? Rap that demonstrates guns, gangs, crimes and violence is not misleading or provoking. If anything, it is exposing the reality of the ghetto and what it means to be Black and poor. The problem should not be with the music, but with the conditions in which Black people are being subjected to live!

Vexed
Boston, MA

I'd like to stress that rap can't last if you not only label it, but attack a certain label. Rap is rap and if you down one type you downin' it all togetha. There's no such thing as straight up jazz rap, R&B rap, gangsta rap or what eva. People rap what they feel.

JB The Main Attraction
Toledo, OH

REALITY BITES

It's good to know that some of our gangsta rappers came together to check the parents and politicians who say gangsta rap is lethal ["Reality Check," June '94]. It's just down, die-hard brothers coming together, putting dope tracks together, making a grip off their inner-city living. All I can say is prepare yourself, gangsta rap ain't going nowhere soon.

Jo Jo
San Antonio, TX

Since when has the wisdom of a 13-year-old boy been the voice of reason? He is a child and not a reasoning adult. Yes, growing up in "hell" can make you grow up quick, but that environment can also lead to underdeveloped critical thinking. They may really believe that today's reality is forever. I feel sorry for 2 Low because he was being used by those so-called adults to make a point they couldn't articulate. And to comment on James Smith's statement that "rap is the biggest challenge to the government in a long-ass time. It's bigger than Martin Luther King. . ." Is he serious? Does he really think that talking nasty on wax, rappin' about cappin' niggas and slappin' bitches is a real challenge to any authority?

Lee Jones
Louisville, KY

NO DISRESPECT

Your frank, hip-hop discussion about the word "nigger" ["What's My Name?" by Delphine Fawundu and Kristin Clark, May '94] left me with the impression that quite a few rappers and at least one comedian need to ask somebody before they drop any more pseudo-science on the rest of us. Paul Mooney's attempt to beautify any form of "nigger" reflects a slave mentality of looking at a bad situation through rose-colored glasses. The next African American who uses "nigger" as a casual term of endearment should consider whether they're addressing men and women or property.

Mark Fitzgerald Armstrong
Chicago, IL

I'm a brother of many different ethnic backgrounds, and I am just home on release from a penile facility. When I went on the block, all my peeps was like, "Oh shit. What up my nigga?" It's not like brothers are using it to disrespect each other. In the ghetto we change the meaning of words and make our own dialect. We just change it up to mean like "What up son?" "What up God?" or "What up baby paw?"

A Half Caucasian Convict
Highland, NY

A HOE IS JUST A HOE

"We're using hoe as a positive word," is the epitome of the most ignorant, self-destructive and anti-womanhood dialogue I've ever heard ["Studio Hoez," by Rob Marriott, May '94]. Any female who dares to depict hoein', survival sex and/or prostitution in terms of pride needs to re-evaluate and learn what victimization, self-worthlessness, despair and hopelessness are all about. Most female prostitutes sell their bodies for food and a place to stay. When a woman must use her body to achieve fame, love and loot, then she has reached her demise. Women are struggling to survive in a society which honors not our minds, our hearts and our souls, but our physical shape and abilities. HWA is an embarrassment to the true females who are on a continual quest for knowledge, wisdom, understanding and a righteous way of life.

Queen J-Love
San Diego, CA

I think HWA is a poor excuse for women and they have no talent. Using the words fuck, suck, dick and pussy is selling nothing but sex, not music. If it is classified as music, their music is taking one step back in the wrong direction for women. A hoe is a hoe and the media has got three new ones on their hands. I think they are cashing in on the misery women have had to endure for years and are making things worse.

Ms. Octavia
Staten Island, NY

I sum up these lost girls like this: You can't redefine the word hoe. How can three girls redefine a word spoken and used by millions, not just hip-hoppers? And where did this "Studio Hoez" bullshit come from? Let's not forget the word "gimmickz." From gun-totin' crazies to karate choppin' rappers and now these church girlz pressing up as hoez to sell a few records? Rap music is definitely out of control.

Edwin Arzu
Bronx, NY

THE WORLD IS YOURS

After hearing Nas's debut album, it hit me. Real, underground, lyrically skillful East Coast hip-hop has been straight saved by the likes of Wu-Tang, Black Moon, Jeru The Damaja, Keith Murray, Akinyele and most definitely Nas. The real hip-hop crusade is in effect.

Lanso
Chicago, IL

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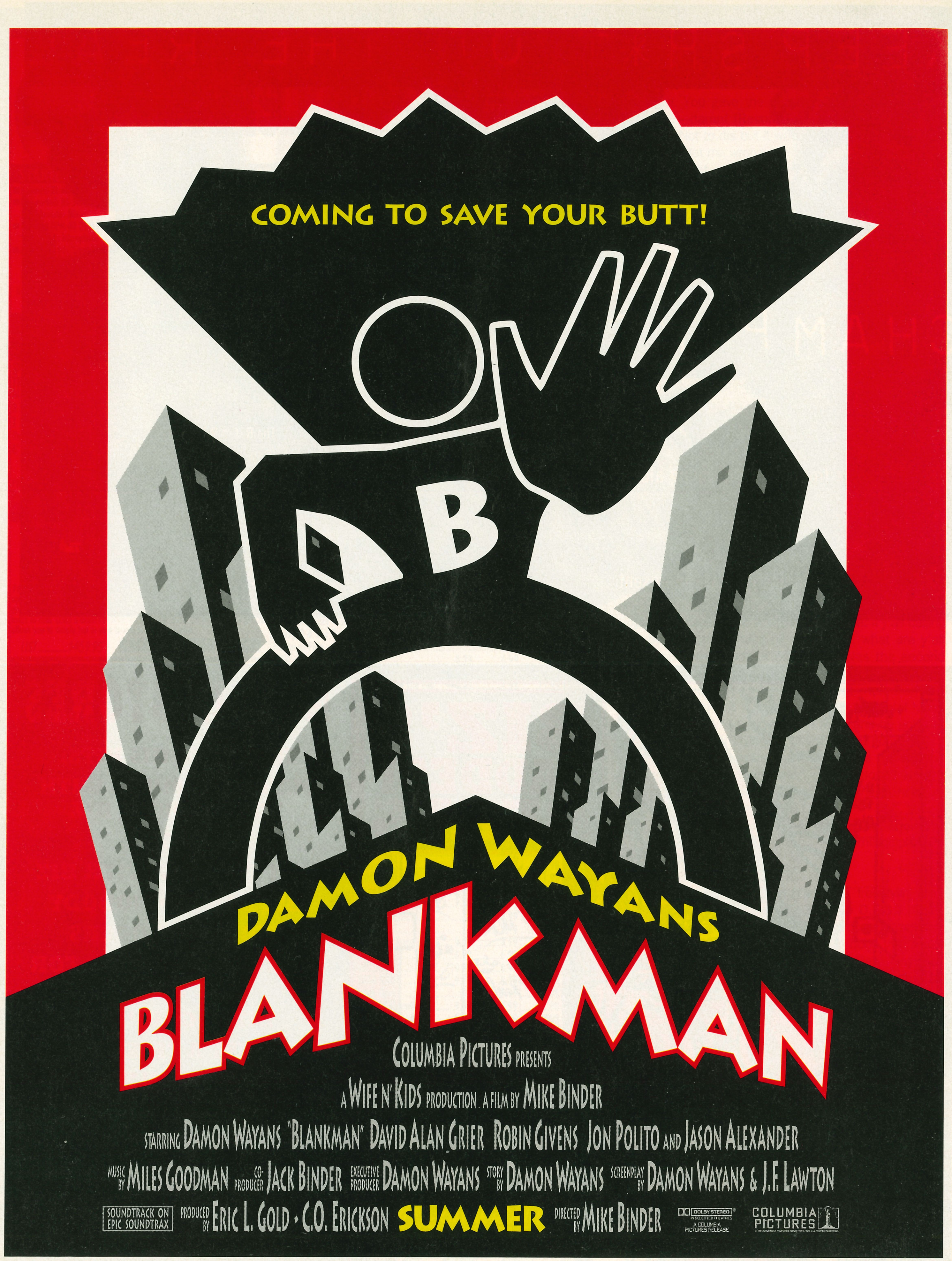
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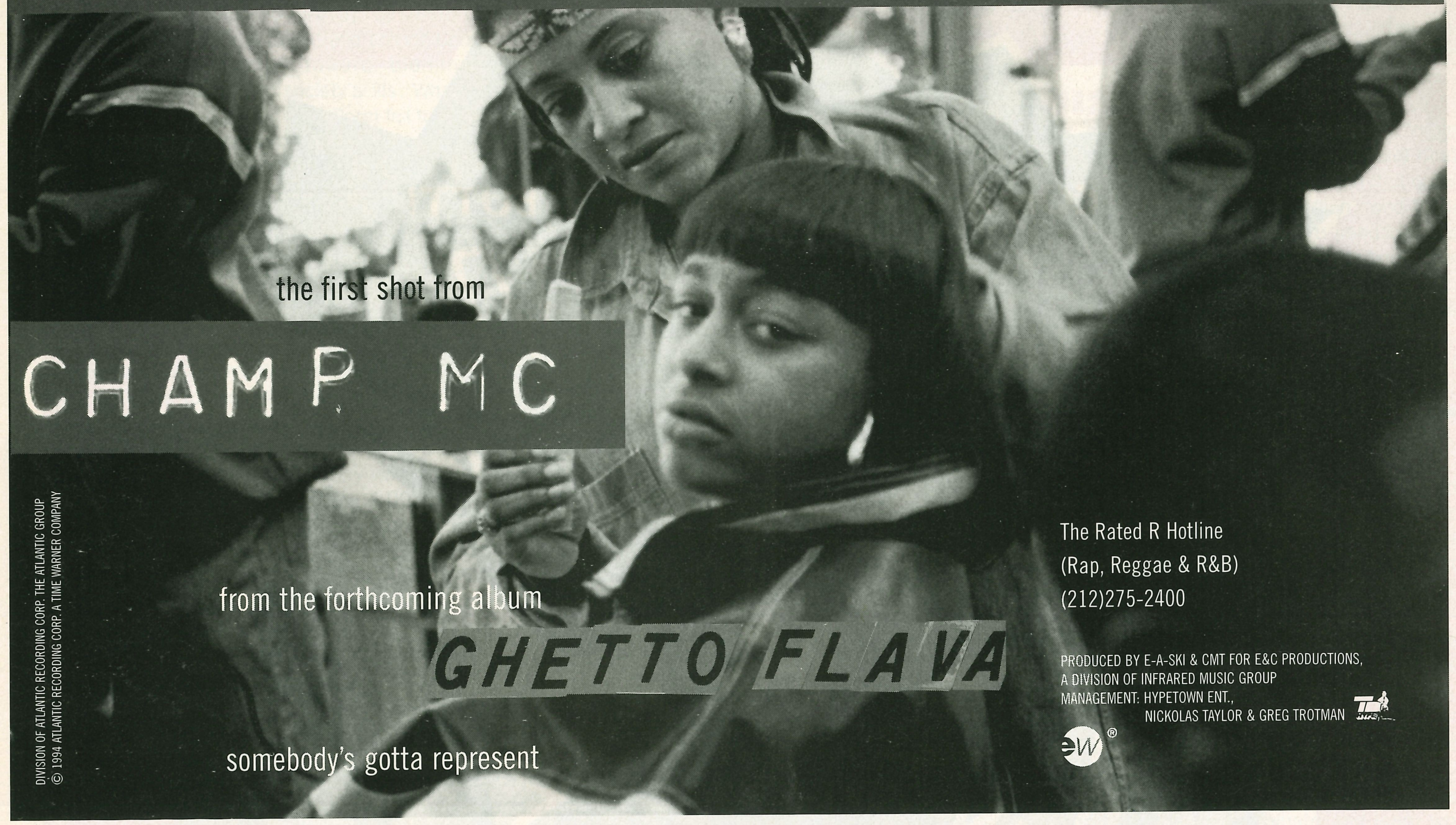

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LETTERS CONT.

The journalists you hire are straight up biased. I can understand y'all from New York, but damn, give the fellas from the West Coast some mics too. You gave the nigga Nas five mics—damn! [Record Report, Apr. '94.] Not to dis but it wasn't all that. Don't get me wrong, the CD definitely flows and I'm from the East and it's East Coast 'til the end, but Snoop's debut album slams, and y'all turned around and gave it only four mics. I like quality over quantity any day, but Snoop's album represents both. Let's be more impartial to the rappers we know from around the way and give all rappers, whether East or West, their due respect.

L.G.
Darmstadt, Germany

No matter what others say, *Illmatic* is the best album since Eric B and Rakim's *Paid in Full*. How could you even compare Dre's *The Chronic* with anything Nas did? Dre is a phat producer, no doubt, but he doesn't come close to phat ass producers like Premier, Pete Rock or Diamond D.

Mike Feathers
New Brunswick, NJ

I was sadly disappointed by Nas. I've never seen five mics before but this album didn't deserve it. Nas isn't as dope as you say. He never changes his tone and he has dead beats. This album is not a classic and needs to be stripped of two mics, at least.

The Highpost Host
Green Cove Springs, FL

Oops! Y'all done made a boo-boo big time. If y'all calling Nas the second coming of somebody, what are y'all gonna call Jeru? First of all, who is Nas the second coming of? Rakim? Who said he was the first coming. If you gonna base it on lyrics and that melodramatic mindset, Rakim had it, but you gots to give total lyrical props to Kool G. Nas lacks the ill lyrics and he got that same old classical style of rhyming. If you gonna call a nigga the second coming, he can only be the second coming of KRS-One. Who even comes close? He got style, concept and lyrics—he ain't lacking in none of those departments.

The Arrow MG
Philadelphia, PA

FREESTYLE FIX

With rap getting away from it's roots, freestylin' isn't important anymore ["Lyrics To Go," by D.E.S.T.I.N.Y., May '94]. While freestylin' is helpful, it doesn't make or break an MC. If Guru doesn't freestyle does that make songs like "Dwyck" or "Just to Get a Rep" any less dope? No. Do people expect Toni Braxton to come up with a whole new song on stage? No. If an MC can freestyle he should, but if he can't and still turns out dope hits, he shouldn't be dissed.

D. Madd Poet
Atlanta, GA

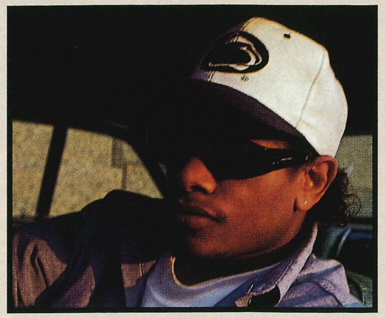
I feel being able to freestyle is another arsenal to a rapper's skills. Being able to freestyle is like a basketball player who shoots with his left and right hand. Freestylin' gives a rapper an advantage over other rappers. It doesn't mean they are better, but that they have an extra skill to separate themselves from the rest.

Tony Bevill
Los Angeles, CA

MEDIA WATCH

BY PISTOL PETE

RING THE ALARM



GANGSTA, GANGSTA

CHI MODU

As with most mass media efforts on the subject, MTV's recent "Gangsta Rap, an MTV News Special Report," was lacking in new information and answers. In fact, the program seemed more like a slammin' 30-minute rap video in comparison to the network's follow-up, repeat airing of their own '93 documentary, the **Tabitha Soren**-hosted "Generation Under The Gun," which better utilized interviews with the young people directly affected by the tremendous gun and violence problems plaguing the junior set. The irony of the "Gangsta Rap" program was that in displaying their usual top-notch production skills (in this case, a slick editing mix of rapper interviews, video clips and songs), MTV was partially guilty of "glamorizing" violence, at least by the standards of those who've been publically protesting gangsta rap.

Trying to cover their asses, the network aired a printed "parental guidance"-esque warning that strangely appeared for the first time midway through the show. It read, "The following program contains violent imagery and excerpts of some music videos that are not shown on MTV. Viewer discretion is advised." I kept waiting for MTV to flash another warning, one which said, "By the way, we're not hip anymore," but it never came.

A particular highlight, though, was the program's ode to "The Message." Portions of the original video were shown and, over its beats, Snoop was filmed rapping, "It's a jungle sometimes, it makes me wonder how I keep from going under." Of the song, Stepsun Records CEO **Bill Stephney** said, "Twelve years later, with the absence of anybody paying attention to **Melle Mel** when he was saying, 'Don't push me,' we have kids who are saying, 'I don't care, I'll buck you down. I'll do whatever I have to to survive, 'cause nobody cares about me, so why should I care about anybody else?'" Later, Stephney concluded the show by saying gangsta rap records "are always like an alarm. It's an alarm for us to do something."

COFFEE ACHIEVERS

Material about rap is approaching the status of "**Quayle** jokes" on late-night TV. One memorable evening brought three hip-hop references within two hours of each other on NBC's "The Tonight Show" with **Jay Leno** and "Late Night" with **Conan O'Brien**. During a week of shows that were shot in New York, Jay Leno was interrupted by a "surprise" visit from **Madonna** when he was doing his opening monologue. Madonna ended the brief interview saying she was leaving to go see the Knicks play but not before adding, "Actually, I'm not going straight to the game. I started this organization. . . it rehabilitates rappers and basketball players, and there's just so much work to be done." Minutes later, a segment called "Mr. Brain" had Leno answering general questions about New York City from band leader **Branford Marsalis**. "What is Soho?" asked Marsalis. "Soho," replied Leno, "is how **Tupac Shakur** addresses his women."

Conan O'Brien's barb occurred during his opening monologue. "Did you hear this?" he asked. "2 Live Crew rapper **Luther Campbell** was arrested for reportedly saying to his girlfriend, quote, 'I swear on my mother I will kill you and dump you in a lake somewhere.' His defense is that he was just working on lyrics to a new song." The joke generated much laughter, but nothing like the gem Leno kicked a week or so earlier. "**President Clinton** is considering legislation banning 19 types of assault weapons. . . And those are just the ones found in Tupac Shakur's glove compartment." While humorous, don't underestimate the power these jokes have on the nation's overall opinion of rap. This is the stuff people hear before they fall asleep, and what they talk about the next day by the office coffee machine.

MEDIA SAMPLES

GangStarr's resurrection became official when their name appeared on the cover of *Rolling Stone*. Inside the magazine, **Guru** told writer **David Thigpen** "that just being recognized feels good. We had years of crazy frustration." The same issue of RS contained the mag's 1994 Hot List. **Nas** was awarded the "Hot Rapper" category, and this is what he had to say: "I sit down and write my shit like Clinton is about to call me to the mike. Like I could tell [New York City Mayor] **Rudy Giuliani**, 'Yo, bitch, fucking bitch-ass nigger.' When I rap, everyone can hear me". . . •*Ill Communication* brought the usual fawning media coverage that surrounds any new release by the **Beastie Boys**. *Details* did a cover story on the group but assigned it to a writer so out of touch with hip-hop that he spent the entire piece trying to find out the meaning of the word "bozack." Beastie **Ad Rock** finally let him know, but only after first revealing that his drug use is limited to weed these days due to a seizure suffered at a photo shoot in 1989. "If I do stimulants, like coke or speed, it's much easier for me to have a heart attack," he said. . . •The song "Whoomp! There It Is" has obviously run its course, but the phrase refuses to die, especially on daytime TV talk shows. **Khalid Muhammad**'s supporters chanted it when he made good points on "**Donahue**," and the wildly bombastic crowd at WOR's "The **Richard Bey** Show" uses it often, most recently when the host accidently pulled off an elderly female guest's wig. And finally, those cutting-edge, wild and kooky people at the Comedy Channel titled a day of parody programming "Spoof! There It Is." S

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PAY TO PLAY

Rappers who sample other rappers are being forced to cough up cash

Rappers beware: scratching a snippet of **Slick Rick** saying, "Party people in the house" into your next record will cost at least $4,000. Sample anything off the **Cold Chillin'** catalogue, which includes classics by **Biz Markie** and **MC Shan**, and expect to give up 50% of the publishing rights to your song. And it's not just the old stuff that costs, as **Shaq** found out when he sampled (and paid for) six vocal snippets, from **Ice Cube** to **Main Source**, for the song "Intro" on his platinum-selling debut. There is even a price on the hip-hop canon of **KRS-One**—administered and partially owned by **Zomba Music Publishing**—despite the fact that Kris has said that other artists should be able to sample him for free.

Ever since the dawn of turntables and mixers, rappers have sampled the music and voices of their own kind. Those involved usually thought nothing of it, sometimes settling deals with a handshake. But in the multi-million dollar industry that rap has become, all instrumental and vocal snippets must now be cleared, and usually paid for, to avoid litigation.

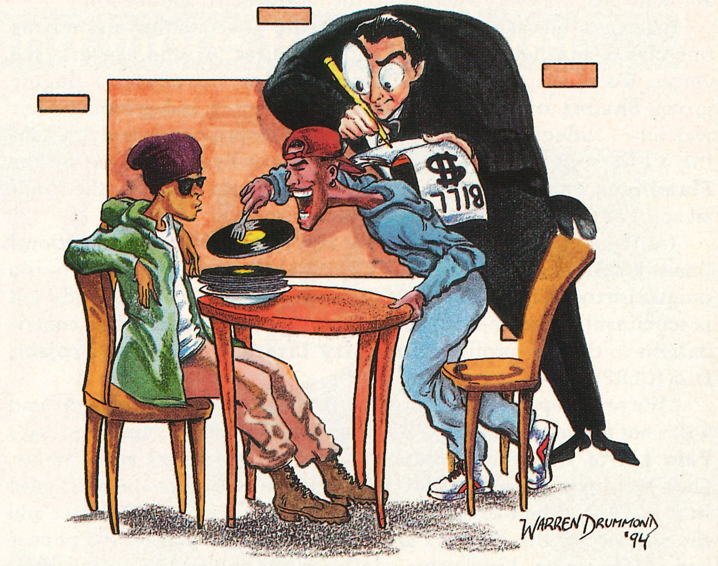
While the concept of a rapper paying another for samples seems odd, especially in an art form based on appropriation, it really shouldn't come as a surprise: a rap sample is treated like any other sample under copyright laws. "If you sample something, you have to clear it," says **Steve Stout**, an A&R representative at **RCA Records**. "You have to go through the normal channels of contacting the record label that owns the master, and also contacting the publisher to get clearance on a particular sample."

In the realm of copyrights, a song consists of its written form (publishing) and a sound performance (master). When a deal is inked and an advance is paid, a record label essentially buys ownership of the master from the artist as well as the rights to that artist's voice. Thus, a rapper who samples another rapper's record has to pay not only the publisher(s) of a song but the record company that controls the master recording and the artist's voice. Due to the nature of the music industry, talk does not come cheap.

"Imagine a record company who's had to pay through the nose for samples on a rapper's record," says attorney **Alex Hartnett**, who represents **Heavy D** and **Jamalski**. "Now when that record is used by another rapper, the record company's natural reflex is, 'Well, someone should pay for it, we had to.' So you can't really hold it against record companies.

"If a rapper controls his publishing," he continues, "then he has the ability to quote a fee as high or low as he wants, but most rappers don't control their own publishing." Thus, in many cases, a rap artist wanting to secure a verbal agreement with another rapper over the use of a sample is not standing on firm legal ground. "It really has become a business, and it's treated like a business, and master rights are treated like a commodity and so are publishing rights," says Hartnett.

Publishing, though calculated in terms of pennies per unit, usually involves significant sums as well. But, too often, control of this commodity is easily signed away. "I think the rap artists need to pay attention to their contracts," says **Deborah Mannis Gardner**, Manager of Sample Clearances at RCA. "When they're doing a publishing deal, the rap artist should say, 'Now is there a clause in there, where if someone samples my stuff then the publishing company has to come to me because I want to make sure that I can do good to other people.' Maybe that's one option." Mannis Gardner cites **GangStarr** and **Wu-Tang Clan** as groups who do have more control over their publishing, and must be directly consulted when another artist samples their music.



"THAT BITE IS GONNA COST YOU KID"

WARREN DRUMMOND

GangStarr's **Guru** says, "Sampling is part of the hip-hop tradition, especially if it's scratched. It's like a compliment and a show of respect." Confronted with the issue of rappers having to pay to sample other rappers, he says, "It's wack. GangStarr has never done that. **Premier** and myself feel that that's part of hip-hop." His manager **Patrick Moxey** confirms this, saying, "With GangStarr, in many cases if they know the rappers who sample them, they don't charge them anything, and if they don't know them, then they'll just charge them a minimal fee just to cover the paperwork." He adds, "Everytime someone that we know comes to us and says, 'Yunno, your record company's trying to charge us to use your music,' we call up the record company and say, 'Look, we want to do a free waiver.' We just did that for **A Tribe Called Quest** on the *Crooklyn* soundtrack."

On the other side of the coin, **Prince Rakeem** of Wu-Tang Clan, says, "I don't mind rappers sampling rappers. I can get with that shit, man. Just take care of business. That's my bottom line. 'Cause we're not doing this shit for free, so you can't front on the fuckin' money." Rakeem speaks from the perspective of an artist who has paid a lot of money to clear samples. "Most rappers ain't gonna say no to the shit," he says, of other rappers sampling them, "but it's a fuckin' business and shit. If you dealin' with a business and shit, muhfuckas should do business. You just can't be charging niggas no $2,500. There should be some kind of money limit on that shit."

Rakeem brings up an important point, which is that there are no real industry standards for the amount of money paid for a sample. Clearance costs range from free to quotes as high as, for example, $7,000 to $8,000 for master rights to any part of the **Doug E. Fresh**/Slick Rick classic "La Di Da Di," which is owned by **David Lucchessi**'s **Reality Records**.

"You know, it's all about what PMD's **Parrish** [**Smith**] said for many years, yunno, the position he's tried to maintain, that you gotta have some type of muhfuckin' control over your art and what you create," says RCA's Stout. On sampling within the hip-hop community, Stout says, "It's just a mutual respect kind of thing. Nobody's trying to hit each other up, we understand this is a business, but we're like the minorities in this business and we have to stand unified in order to make a change. The shit we went through all these years to get rap to this point, sampling the next man's shit is not a big deal, man." But ultimately, it still takes bills to pay for the skills. **S.H. FERNANDO JR.**

IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

A New York talent show brings out the best in the community

The lobby of Town Hall, a cozy theater just east of New York City's Times Square, is busy. Teen-aged security guards, ushers, and slightly older public relations people are milling about, gently moving kids dressed in their Saturday-night best (Hockey jerseys and Kani gear are everywhere) into the red-carpeted auditorium.

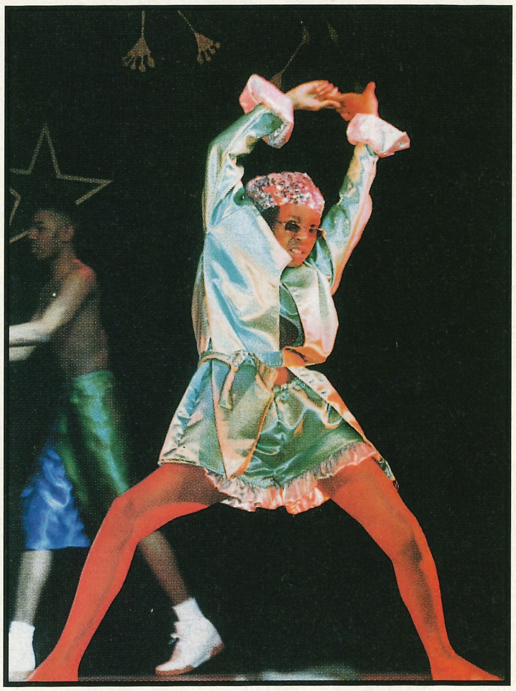
Inside, enthusiasm is ruling. **DJ Demo** is scratching and mixing one classic hip-hop joint after another (circa '91 and earlier). The emcee, **Ro** of the dance crew **Divine Order**, introduces a singing group, **Shadez of Harmony**. Instead of rasping and grinding their way into a **Jodeci** or **Intro** imitation, they surprise everybody by cooing a love song from the '60s, "I Only Have Eyes For You," by the **Flamingos**. Honey-dipped in innocence, the song taps into the familial spirit of the night. The high-schoolers swoon.

It's the **All Stars Talent Show Network**'s 10th annual national finals. Produced by the **Castillo Cultural Center**, the All Stars is a unique partnership between 10,000 inner-city youths nationwide and predominantly middle-class adults who support them through contributions to the non-profit **Community Literacy Research Project, Inc.** (CLRP)

"We're independent. We're not funded by the government and we're not funded by the city. We raise all of our money ourselves," says **Pam Lewis**, the show's producer, who's also an actress and a singer. She's been involved with producing the show ever since she performed in it in 1984. "The way we do it is members of the Castillo Center and the majority of the All Stars get on street corners and on the phones and ask for money. People give a dollar or two and we build a contributor base."

About 98,000 people from major Northeastern cities like Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Newark contributed money to the All Stars talent show last year. "You have all these different people working together. Black and Latino youths from the urban areas, artists from downtown, and all these people who give," says Lewis. "This is a good example of how different folks are working together to do something positive in the city."

The result is a series of shows where young people rap, dance, sing and perform original skits in a positive environment that's all their own. The kids produce the events—they mix the sound and run the spotlight, they're the stage managers, the emcees, the crew and the security team.



A TALENT SHOW PARTICIPANT GETS BUSY

"I danced here two years in a row and now I'm an usher to stay part of the All Stars," says 13-year-old **Telika** from the Bronx. Down on the stage, **On-Slaught**, one of the many rap groups here, is flaunting the most skills. They're followed by the **Little Rascals**, one of many high-energy dance teams. Another crew, **Shorty's Taking Over**, features a nine-year-old doing the butterfly on her head, on top of a chair.

Throughout the show, all the groups emphasize entertaining not posturing. There are dancers who rap and rappers who dance and a whole lot of people just happy to shake their thing. "This is how it should be," says **Funkmaster Flex**, one of many special guests. "All the positive energy in here is great. The kids need this," adds **Fab 5 Freddy**, after presenting the Grand Prize to **Larry Sutton**, a cherubic vocalist who did justice to **Tevin Campbell**'s "I'm Ready." One shorty was near tears after losing the rap award to **June Doom**. "We should've won. This was our last chance." Well, thanks to the community, there's always next year.

DIMITRY LEGER

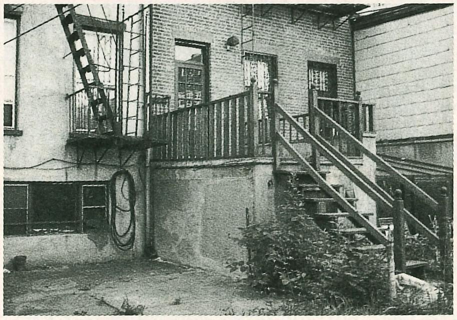
IN COLD BLOOD

A NEW JERSEY RAP PRODUCER IS BRUTALLY MURDERED

In the early morning hours of April 8, rap producer **Rashid Muhammad** was stabbed 22 times with a kitchen knife in his home in Jersey City, New Jersey. When his roomate returned home from work to find Muhammad's front door open, furniture toppled and personal items strewn about, he immediately dialed 911. Responding to the call, Jersey City police discovered Muhammad's dead body collapsed on a neighbor's backyard greenhouse, his recording studio apartment violently bloodied in a frantic effort to escape his attacker.

"The victim had a look of terror on his face," officer **Edward Madden** said. "I was astounded by the brutality. The crime scene was gory, like something out of a *Friday The 13th* horror movie. Without a doubt, this murder showed total inconsideration for human life."

Homocide Investigator, **Anthony Striffolino**, said at first there were "so few leads it seemed like an impossible case." But when Stiffolino discovered a pager had been stolen from the victim, he duplicated the signal to monitor any calls being made to it. After tracking down and questioning the callers, he eventually traced the pager to Queens, New York—a break which led to the identification and May 4 arrest of two individuals tied to the producer.



THE GREENHOUSE (FAR RIGHT) WHERE RASHID MUHAMMAD'S BODY WAS FOUND

In the shadows of Manhattan, 29-year-old Muhammad, also known as Benjamin Alexis, mixed and recorded several underground rap groups. Through his work, he'd met his alleged murderer, 25-year old **Henry Short**, also known as Ramal Short, a member of a Jamaica, Queens's rap group, the **Funky Nomads**. Short had been to Muhammad's Jersey City studio on several occassions to discuss the group's masterings. Police, who traced the beeper and other stolen items to Short and Far Rockaway, Queens resident **Derek James "Universal" Brown**, claim that the two individuals robbed Muhammad and took his life in an apparent attempt to eliminate witnesses.

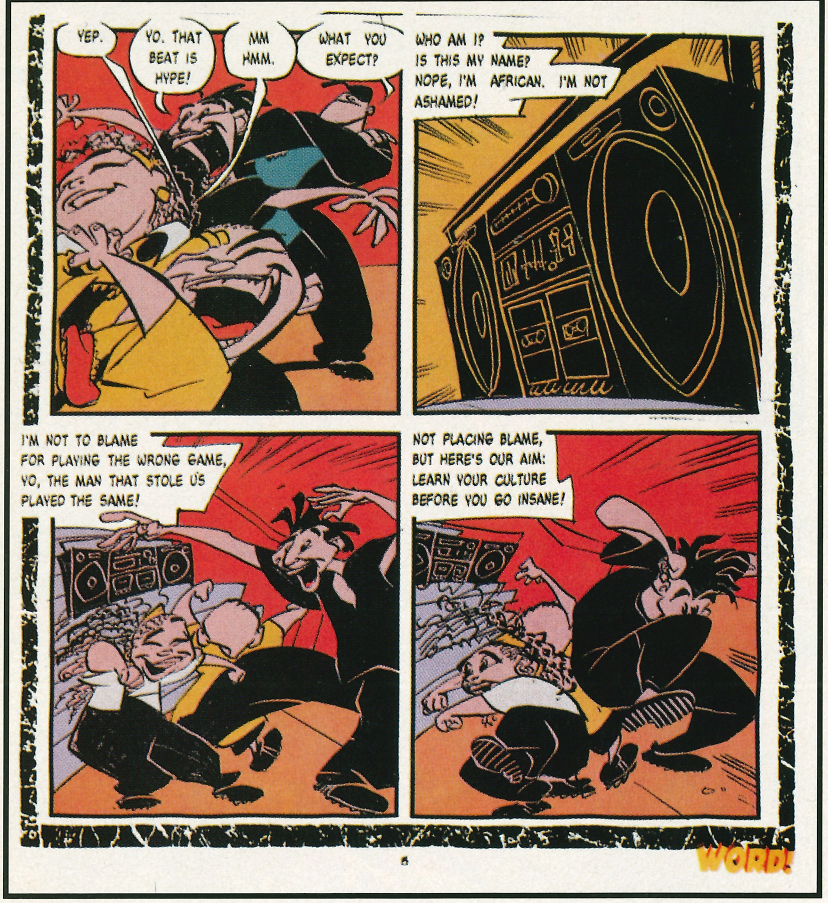
Brown was arrested in Far Rockaway, Queens. Short was arrested in Redding, PA on the rooftop of his sister's apartment building. Both are being held in the Hudson County Correctional Center in Kearny, New Jersey, and are scheduled for indictment hearings this summer.

TOM DINARDO

BOTTOM PHOTO: CHI MODU

PSYCHOSONIC COMICS

KRS-One and the Marvel Comics Group team up to battle cultural ignorance


YEP.
YO. THAT BEAT IS HYPE!
MM HMM.
WHAT YOU EXPECT?
WHO AM I? IS THIS MY NAME? NOPE, I'M AFRICAN. I'M NOT ASHAMED!
I'M NOT TO BLAME FOR PLAYING THE WRONG GAME, YO, THE MAN THAT STOLE US PLAYED THE SAME!
NOT PLACING BLAME, BUT HERE'S OUR AIM: LEARN YOUR CULTURE BEFORE YOU GO INSANE!
6
WORD!

MARVEL COMICS

The worlds of comic books and hip-hop collide with this groundbreaking collaboration between **KRS-One** and **Marvel Music**. *Break The Chain* is an educational multi-media experience consisting of a 32-page full-color comic book and audio cassette that allows readers to listen to the story as it unfolds before their eyes. In addition to the stylized artwork of comic industry vet **Kyle Baker**, the package boasts three new songs by the Blastmaster, who plays one of the central characters fighting to break the chains of ignorance that shackle the African American community.

As the voice of Big Joe Krash, KRS continues his mission to edutain the masses—letting them know that there is far more to Black history than what is taught in school. And as always, Kris succeeds in injecting his real life personality into the story line: "When I go to school, the teacher ain't teachin'/And when I go to church, the preacher ain't preachin'/Who do they think they reachin?/The old style is dead!/Instead, wake up the knowledge in your own head!"

As the tale progresses, readers are transported into a detailed inner city world. The accompanying soundtrack breathes life into the printed page, enhancing the plot's decidedly three-dimensional atmosphere. From the boom-bap of a ghetto blaster, to barking dogs and car alarms, it's easy to be drawn in by this tale of discovery and cultural awareness, even if it is intended for 'younger audiences.'

Depending on how successful hip-hop's first psychosonic comic is, Marvel may go forward with plans to make it a quarterly—featuring a different theme and a different rap artist each time. **Chuck D**, the **Beastie Boys** and **Cypress Hill** have already been tentatively scheduled. Whether it flys or not, however, this first edition still makes for one fine collectable.

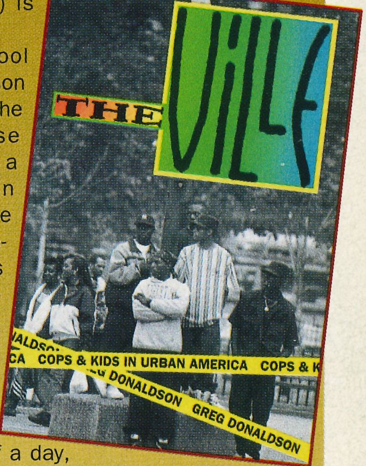
MOSES MAGNUM

BOOK REVIEW

DAILY OPERATION

Kids and cops fight for respect in Brownsville

All too often, the media is guilty of portraying and promoting clichéd images of our urban predicament—big-time drug dealers like Nino Brown running things, crooked cops on the take, and ruthless teenage killers who don't think twice about squeezing a trigger. Sure, it's hectic out here, but the true story is infinitely more complex than most people know. That's why Greg Donaldson's *The Ville: Cops & Kids In Urban America* (Ticknor & Fields, $22.95) is such an important work.

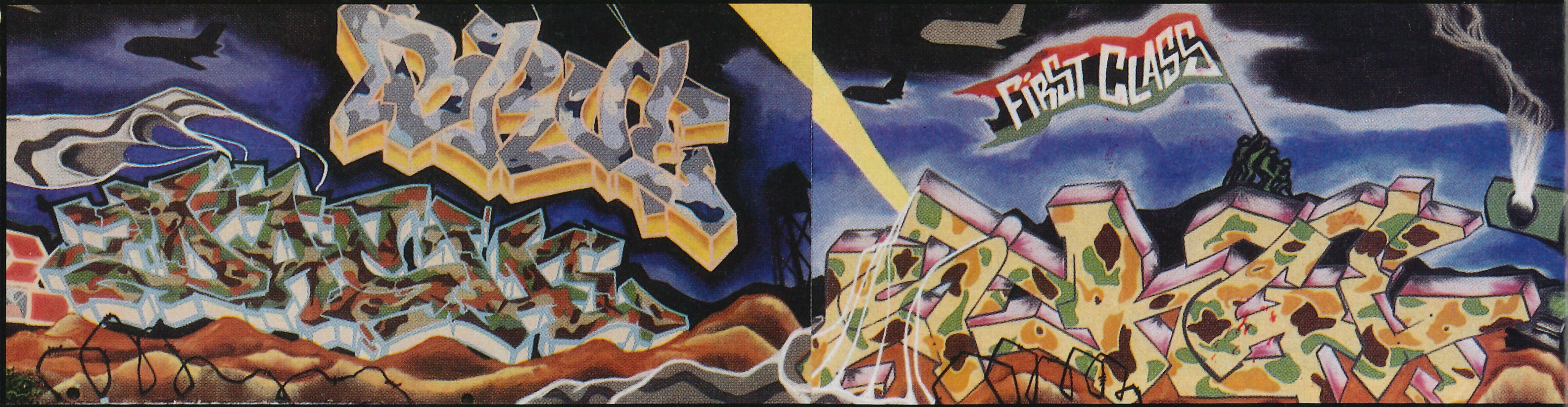


A long-time public school teacher in Brooklyn, Donaldson is a keen observer of life in the 'hood—in this case Brownsville, which serves as a metaphor for all of urban America. In this first-rate piece of journalism, he faithfully documents what life is like on the streets of "The Ville," which are controlled by the diametrically opposed forces of the cops, usually white men who return to their middle class neighborhoods at the end of a day, and the young Blacks who call the projects home. "Don't be fooled by Brownsville," an old-timer tells the author, "If you take a fast look all you see is bad things. You stay around awhile, you'll see the good things. This is a community that comes out in shifts."

Taking us from the neighborhood barbeque and successful theatre project to the daily blood-letting on the streets, Donaldson captures the essence of life here. He also dispels many myths by bringing us directly into the lives of such characters as Sharron Corley, a student at Thomas Jefferson High School, and Housing Police officer Gary Lemite. An aspiring actor and singer, Corley gets into his share of trouble as both a victim and perpetrator of crime. Through him, we experience the roller-coaster ride of coming of age in the ghetto. On the late shift, we follow Lemite, one of the few Black officers in the precinct, and also one who honestly cares about his job and making an impact on the community. Not all cops are as bad as we think. In fact, behind the scenes at the station and on patrol, we even find that the police are often just as uncertain and vulnerable as some of the gun-toting kids with whom they are constantly clashing.

Donaldson skillfully segues between both of these worlds, evoking in great detail, the gritty reality from an insider's perspective. At times, we are left wondering how he was able to be in so many places at once and prod so deeply into the minds of his subjects. At the same time, he manages to weave his own commentary into the narrative without being preachy or passing judgement, thus contributing to an overall understanding of the urban dilemma. *The Ville* is gutsy and real—a must-read for anyone questioning the aural funk journalism of rap.

S.H. FERNANDO JR.



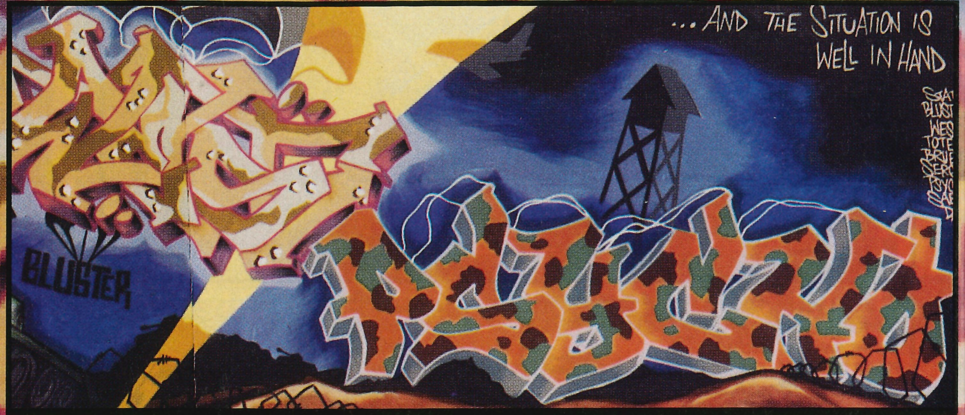
BRUE, DASH, SERGE— FC CREW DROPPING BOMBS

GRAFFITI-A-THON '94

On Saturday, May 14, PS 15 in Patterson, NJ was the spot where artists from New York, New Jersey, Chicago, Washington, Boston and as far away as Paris gathered to celebrate graf and show skills. Patterson native and Old School writer "Mitch" was responsible for getting the approval from local officials, allowing the artists to paint legally. Along with Cope 2, the talent was gathered and Graffiti-a-thon was in effect!

Some of the artists arrived as early as 6:00am to start painting, while others would up breaking night finishing their pieces. This event was complete with an open mic and a live DJ, keeping the hip-hop vibe real.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTINA "DULCE LOVE" VERAN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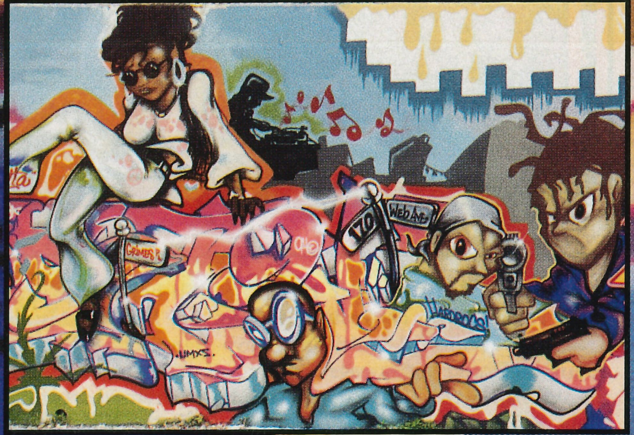
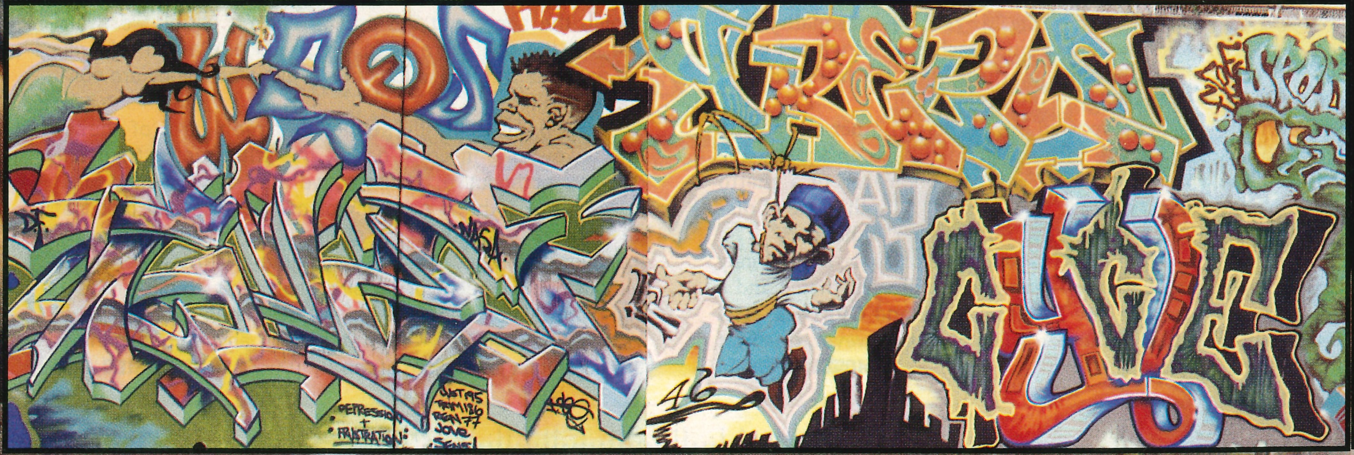
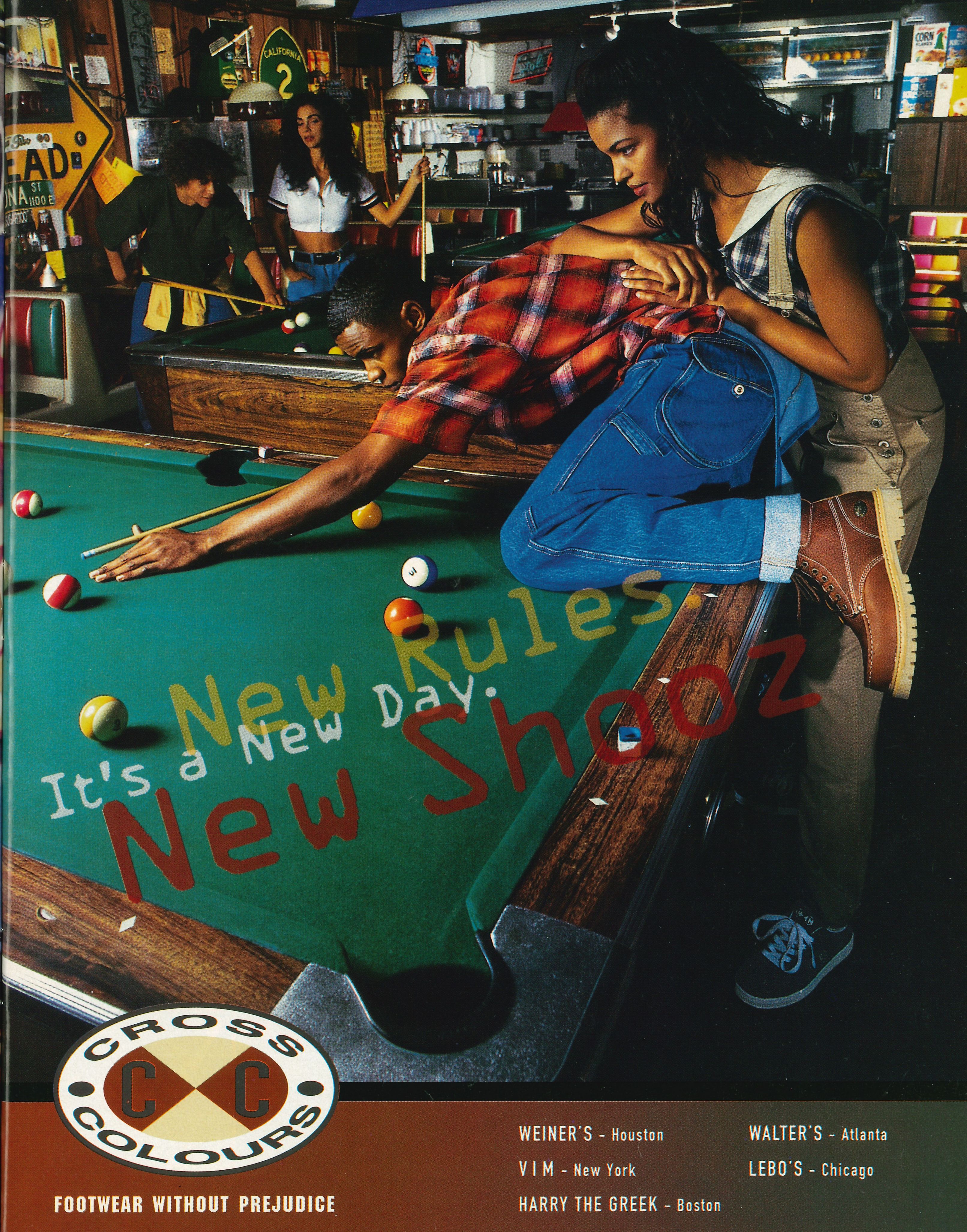


SERVE ONE—A BRONX TALE



GREED ONE HANGS TIGHT WITH **CYCLE** SHOWING MAD PAINT CONTROL


It's a New Day.
New Rules.
New Shooz
CROSS C C COLOURS

FOOTWEAR WITHOUT PREJUDICE

WEINER'S - Houston
VIM - New York
HARRY THE GREEK - Boston
WALTER'S - Atlanta
LEBO'S - Chicago

MAD SKILLZ

The New Music Seminar MC Battle For World Supremacy, not always known to feature the most supreme lyricists, sparked a nice buzz for last year's winner, **Supernatural** (now signed to East West/Atlantic), who dazzled the musically, racially and globally mixed NMS crowd with his grimy off-the-head skills. Coming in a close second in that battle, with a more conversational style than the extra-terrestrial approach of his adversary, was **Mad Skillz**, who has since returned from his home in Richmond, Virginia to earn a few more points in the Rotten Apple.

Early one Friday morning this past spring, **Q-Tip** from **A Tribe Called Quest** brought Mad Skillz up to New York radio's freestyle headquarters, 89TEC9, for what turned out to be a classic session. Expanding on **KRS**'s concept in "Hip-Hop vs. Rap," Mad Skillz used a collection of his own favorite punchlines from recent rap hits for his first rhyme over a **45 King** "lost break beat." "Boo ya ka/Throw ya guns in the air/She keeps passin' me by/But I don't care/Music/Man I catch wreck/And it's a mystery how I keep boxin' up your chest." He and Q-Tip freaked a few verses back and forth, occasionally coming off the head, to the "Flexi Wit Da Tech" **Artifacts** instrumental, and the next day came street fame.

Since the seminar, Mad Skillz had the opportunity to work with one of the MC Battle's co-producers, **DJ Clark Kent**, who did some production for his demo. Other beats on the demo were strictly raw 4-track, self-produced material from the lab with a dope cameo appearance from his man **Kalonji**. Clear lyrics and vivid punchlines such as "I'll split you in two like **EPMD** revenue," prove that Mad Skillz is not just another freestyle MC spitting on ears in a cipher. At press time, he was already beginning work on two songs produced by Q-Tip.

Each month in this column, we profile a talented group or artist who has yet to sign a deal. Send top quality demo tapes with a description of the contents, a black-and- white photo and contact info to:

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MATT LIFE

HIP-HOP QUOTABLE

"Craig Mack
One thousand degrees
You'll be on your knees
Or you'll be burning, begging please
Brother freeze
This man is undisputed
In deep-rooted funk smoke
That leaves your brains booted
This bad MC
With stamina like Bruce Jenner
The winner tasting MCs for dinner
You're crazy like that glue
To think that you can out do my 1, 2
That's sick like the flu
Bwoyee—I flip—bwoyee all the time
'Cause—bwoyee—the rhyme ya kick
Ain't worth a dime
Seems like there's no competition
In this rap world expedition
Ya come around
I'll knock ya out position
No flav could ever dig a grave
For Mack the power pack
Make ya see mad graphics
And come hear the brand new flava in ya ear. . ."

—CRAIG MACK
from his new single "Flava In Ya Ear" (Bad Boy/Arista)

fat tape

"PHYSICAL"
PETE ROCK & CL SMOOTH
Elektra

"I USED TO LOVE HER"
COMMON SENSE
Relativity

"DISTORTION TO STATIC"
THE ROOTS
Geffen

"HIT ME WITH THAT"
THE BEATNUTS
Relativity

"SHOOK ONES"
MOBB DEEP
LOUD/RCA

"SHIT IZ REAL"
MIC GERONIMO
Blunt

"SUICIDE"
GRAVEDIGGAS
Gee Street

"BIG BOX OF BLUNTS"
MAD LION
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"STRESS"(RMX)
ORGANIZED KONFUSION W/ EXTRA P
Hollywood BASIC

"MENTAL STAMINA"
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WARREN G
Violator/RAL

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MC EIHT
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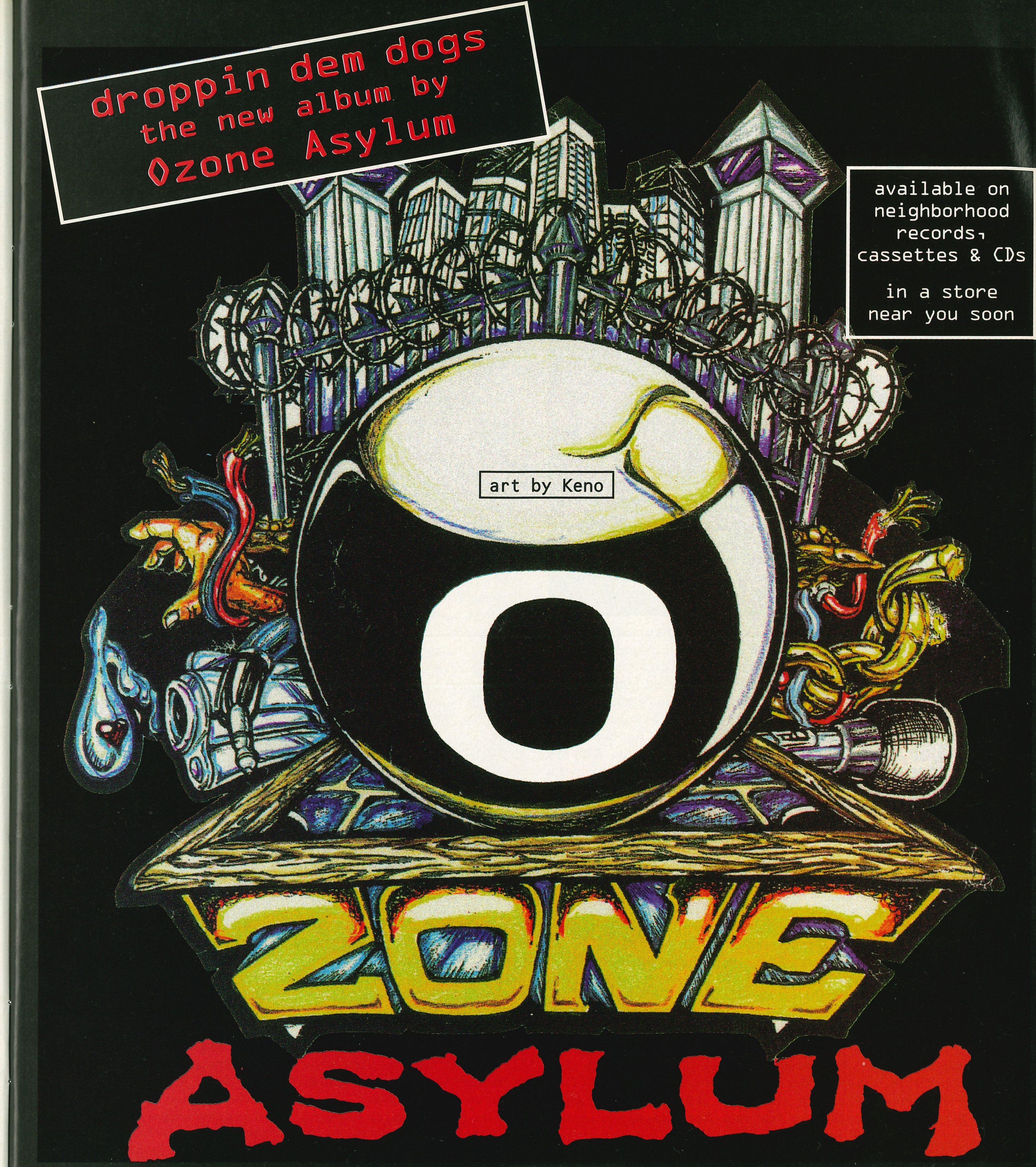

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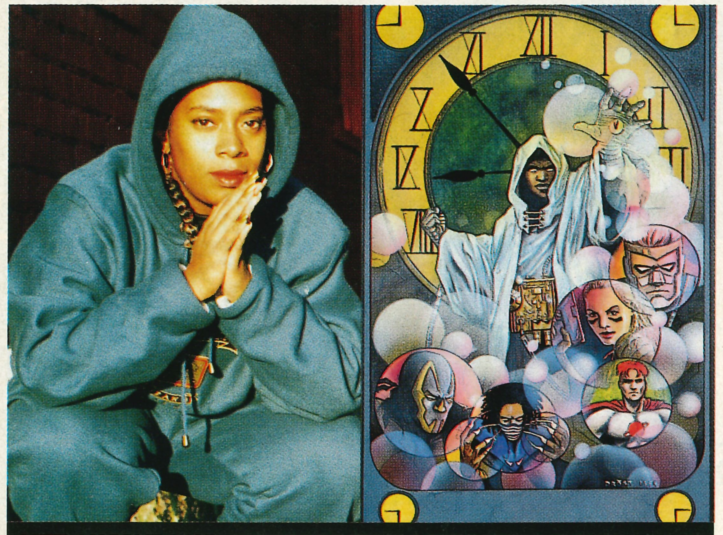
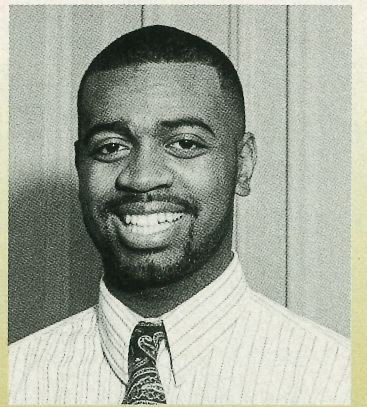


LEFT: MADAME STAR REPRESENTS WITH A SONG ABOUT DEADBEAT DADS RIGHT: THE CRUSH© (BOTTOM LEFT BUBBLE), LAW© (MIDDLE WITH WHITE SHROUD), AND RELATED CHARACTERS WILL BE FEATURED IN AN UPCOMING MULTI-MEDIA PROJECT FROM MOTOWN ANIMATION AND FILMWORKS

Don't believe the hype. Contrary to rumors, **Public Enemy**'s DJ, **Terminator X**, is neither paralyzed nor in a coma. It is true that X was severely injured on a recent motorcycle ride when his bike hit a pothole and sent him flying. He was rushed to intensive care but recovered enough to be released from the hospital. At present, he is at home in bed, nursing a broken left foot and a broken right leg back to health. . . •While some hip-hop artists use fictional tales of blood and gore as a gimmick, **Rhyme Cartel/American Recordings** artist **Jazz Lee Alston** provides a reality check for all hardcore wannabes. Alston says she witnessed the brutal murder of her cousin, **Jacqueline Alexander**, by her estranged husband, **Paul Alexander**, and recounts the incident in her single "Love. . .Never That." Alston, who appeared on **Sir Mix-A-Lot**'s compilation album *Seattle. . .The Dark Side,* is completing the rest of her debut album in a secret location because she fears reprisals from the accused murderer, who is still at large. The rapper/singer is hoping that the song will not only raise awareness about domestic violence but also prompt anyone with information about the suspect to contact the **New York City Police Department**. . . •Also representin' from a woman's perspective is **Madame Star**, whose single "Baby's Father" on **Cold Chillin'** is getting regular play on The Box. Over a basic beat and some sniffling horns, Star calls out her baby's pops for spending all his time and money on sidewalk hoochies and none on his kid. The chorus sums up her sentiments: "My baby's father ain't no damn good. My baby's father ain't doin' what he should". . . •**Michael Davis**, former co-owner and director of **Milestone Media**, which created such Black comic book superheroes as **Hardware**, **Static** and **Icon**, has been named President and Chief Executive Officer of **Motown Animation and Filmworks** (a division of **Motown Records**). Davis and the company plan to break new ground in the areas of interactive game development, video games, and animated and live action films, as well as put together an aggressive educational program for youth. When asked if he'd be including comic book production in his business plan, Davis replied, "Comics were my first love, and you never forget your first love". . . •More drama in the **Main Source** camp. Rapper **Mikey D**, who replaced **Large Professor**, has left the group. Mikey, who said he did not get along with K-Cut and Sir Scratch, likened his relationship with them to *The Odd Couple,* saying he was "**Oscar** and they were **Felix**." He is currently seeking a solo deal. . . •Breaking out of hip-hop's regional rivalry, **Compton's Most Wanted**'s **MC Eiht** and Staten Island's **Wu-Tang Clan** hooked up to shoot the video for Wu-Tang's single, "Can It Be All So Simple." Eiht, who flew out to New York to cameo in the video, said, "Wu-Tang gave me mad love. Niggas who we didn't even know were runnin' up to our car and givin' us bags of weed! It wasn't an East Coast thing, it wasn't a West Coast thing, it was a Black thing, a street thing". . . •It looks like **Tag Team**'s "Whoomp! There It Is," finally won the battle for most popular no-brainer phrase of the year. Eclipsing **95 South**'s "Whoot! There It Is," which went platinum itself, "Whoomp!" sold well over four million, making it not only the best-selling rap single ever but the second biggest-selling single in the history of pop music, right behind "We Are the World". . . •It turns out that adults may not have been the only ones responsible for the massive success of Tag Team's single. America's shorties voiced their own opinion at the recent **7th Annual Nickelodeon Kid's Choice Awards**, voting "Whoomp!" their favorite song of the year. . . •In other certification news, **Snoop Dogg**'s *Doggy Style* passed the 4 million sales (quadruple platinum) mark, the *Above the Rim* soundtrack went platinum and the "Player's Ball" single from **Outkast** hit gold. Ⓢ

POWER MOVE

A member of the Hip-Hop Nation runs for political office



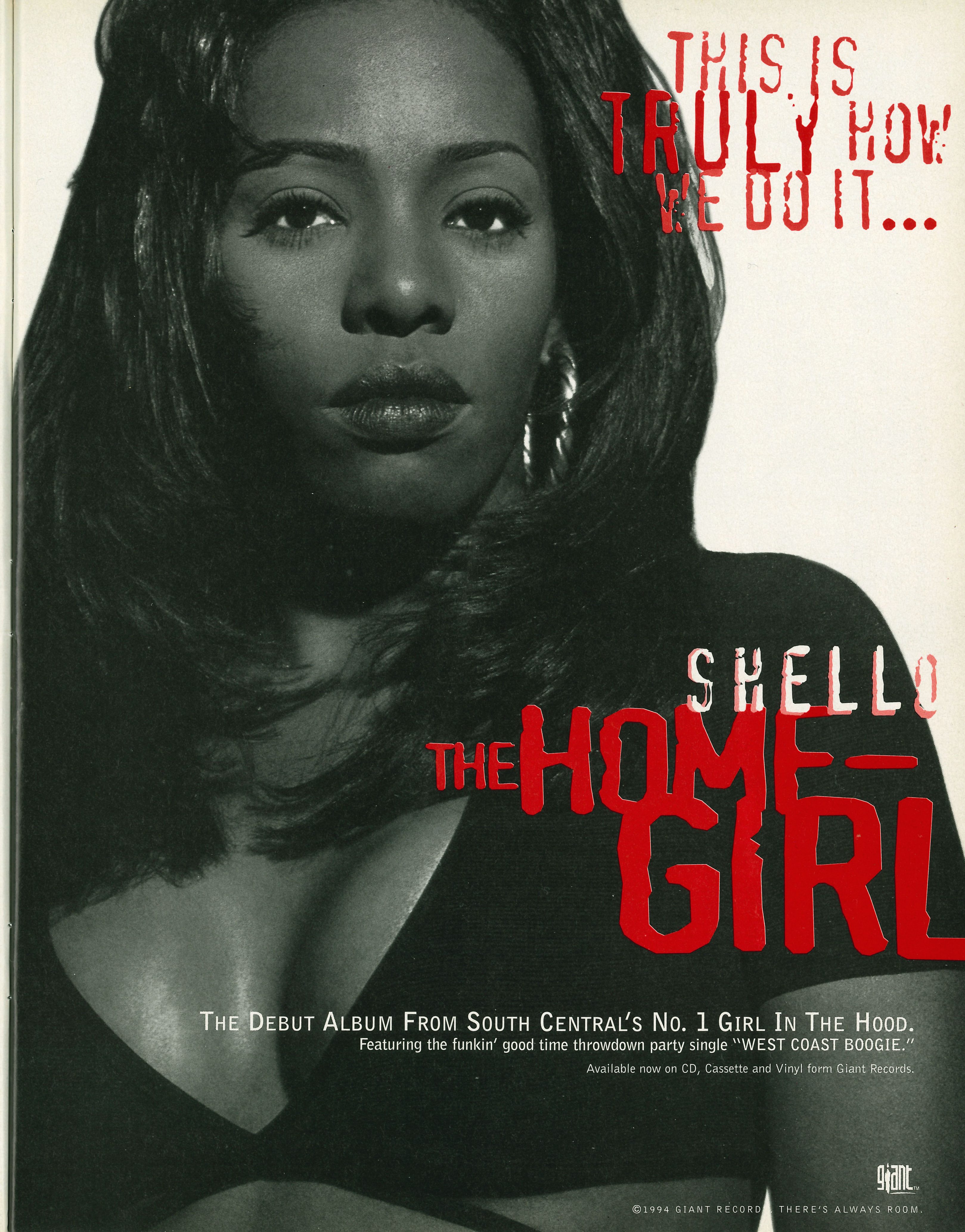
Critics of hip-hop may be growing in number, but so are its advocates. It seems like every day another brother or sister down with the sounds and sensibilities of rap slips into the world of music, movies, writing, sports, corporate America or, most recently, politics. Enter **Ras Baraka** (son of famed poet **Amiri Baraka**), who made a bid this past May to be the Mayor of Newark, New Jersey. Dubbed "the hip-hop candidate" by both opponents and supporters, Ras came in third in a political race which included at least five candidates—all of whom had more political experience.

Ras, a 25-year-old graduate of **Howard University**, co-developed the school's **First Annual Hip-Hop Conference** as well as a revolutionary youth organization called **Black Nia F.O.R.C.E.** He is a former contributor to **The Source** and is presently a school teacher and basketball coach at **Warren Street School** in Newark. A long-time hip-hop advocate, Ras embraced such controversial figures as **Sister Souljah** and **Al Sharpton** in his attempt to unseat Newark's current mayor, **Sharpe James**. "Because of my dedication to hip-hop, I took a big step in running for a position as Mayor of Newark," Ras says. "My candidacy depicts a lot of young people's struggle. . . I felt it was my responsibility to show leadership and put our philosophies in the proper perspective within society."

When the election results were tallied May 10, Ras took 8.4% of the vote and the incumbent took nearly 64%. It was a wide margin but not unexpected. Besides the automatic name recognition, Mayor James had a campaign budget of more than one million dollars. Ras, who rose from relative obscurity, was operating with one percent of that figure, a mere ten thousand dollars. Ras may not have won this time, but his relative success with organizing a campaign and beating out other candidates suggests an important, and inevitable, fact: It's only a matter of time before members of the Hip-Hop Nation begin taking over the reigns of government.

RICH PARKER

MIDDLE PHOTO: MOTOWN ANIMATION AND FILMWORKS™



THE DEBUT ALBUM FROM SOUTH CENTRAL'S NO. 1 GIRL IN THE HOOD.
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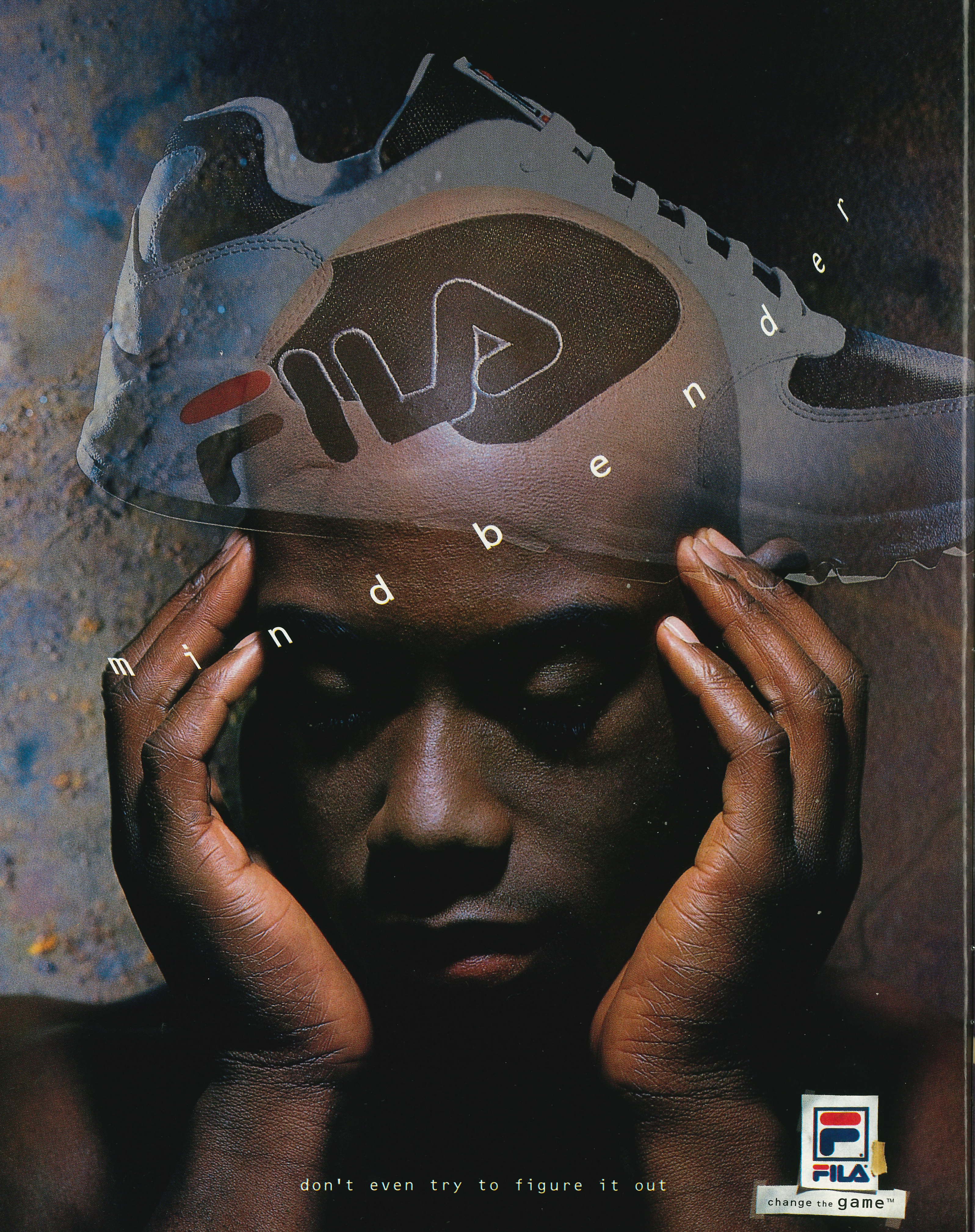
mindbender
FILA
don't even try to figure it out
FILA
change the game™

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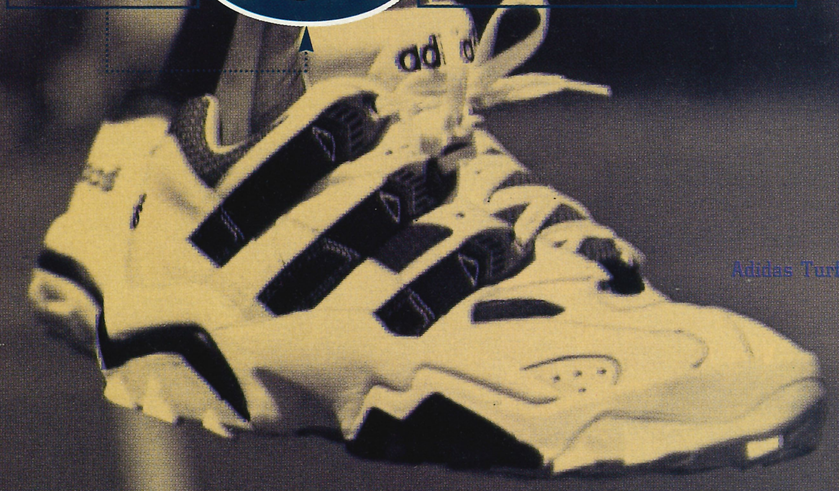
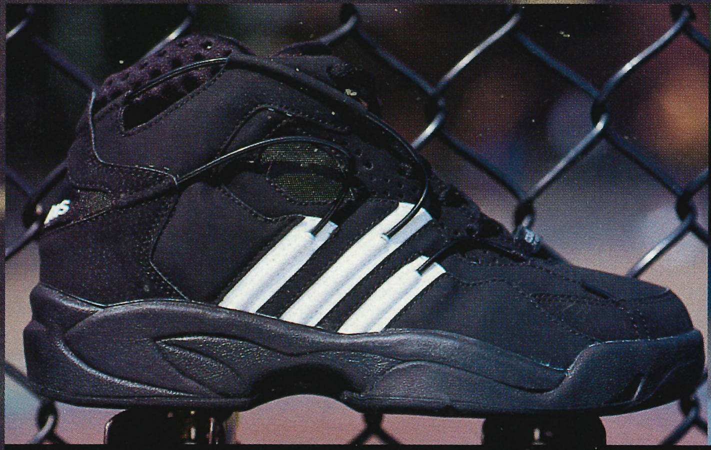
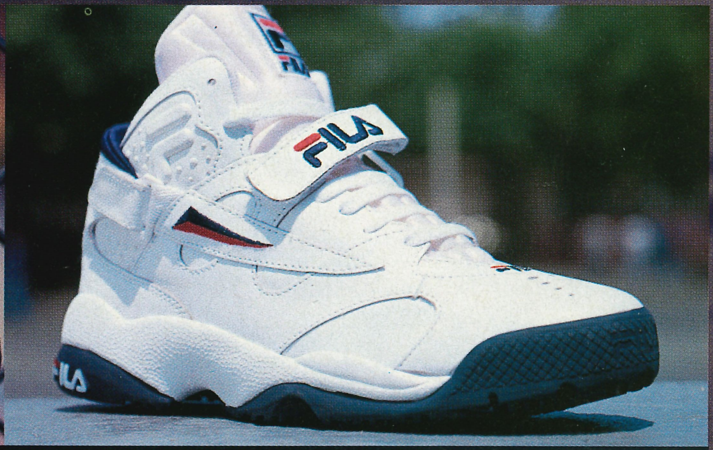
THE fat FIFTEEN

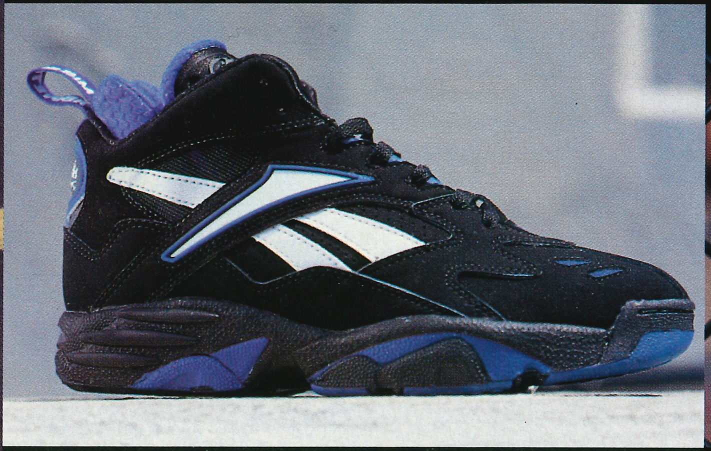

Adidas Turf Trainer Lo $69.95

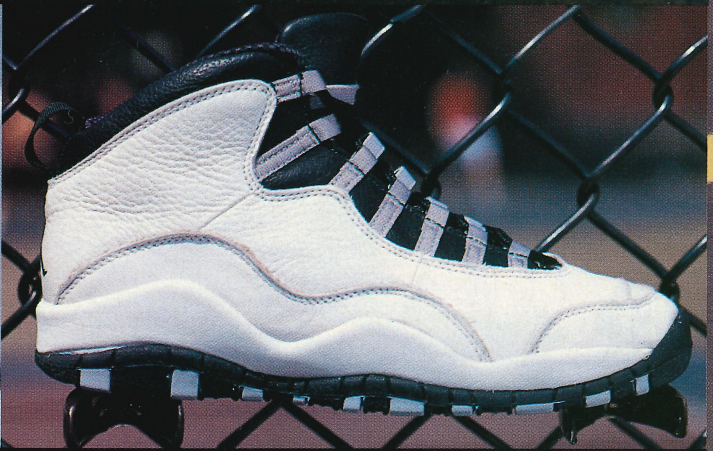
For heads on a quest for the latest kicks, we've compiled new styles in basketball, crosstraining and running to hold you from now 'til fall. With summer madness soon to be a memory, here are 15 fat reasons to sweat yourself.

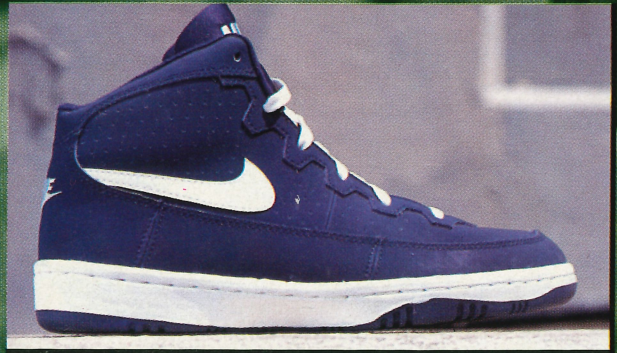
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID TAYLOR


Adidas Intruder $94.95

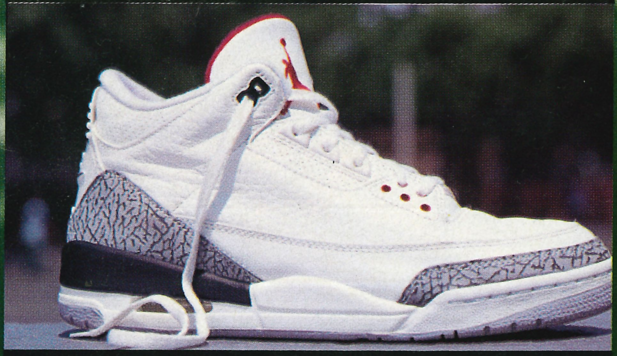

Fila Spoiler Mid $78.95


Reebok Instapump Vert Mid $99.99

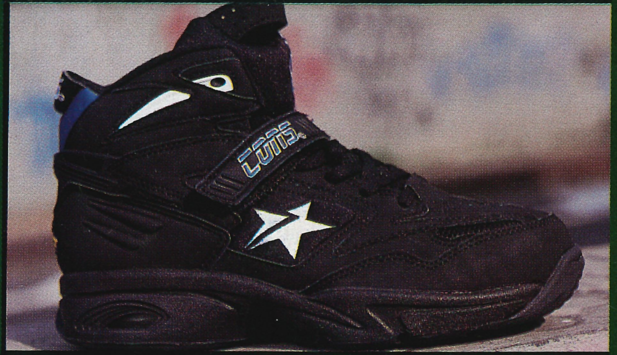

Nike Air Jordan $125 (available 11/1)



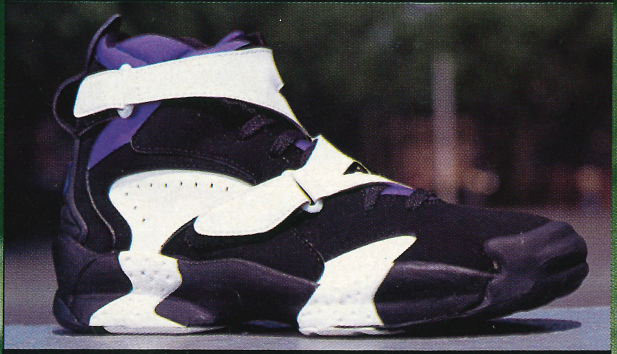
Nike Basic Original Basketball $55



Nike Air Jordan 3 $110



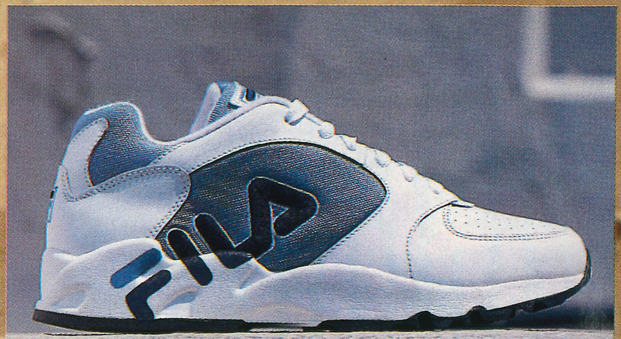
Converse Run N Slam Mid $90



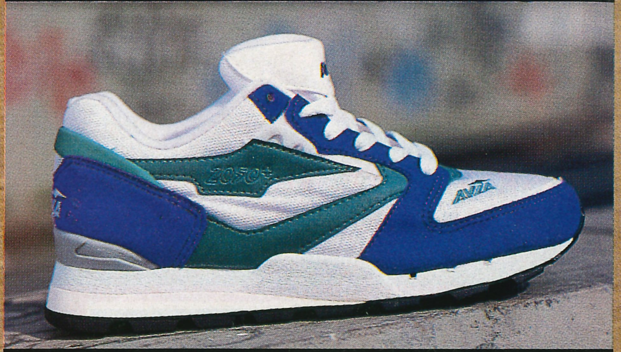
Avia Team 995 $90

Nike Air Mission $100

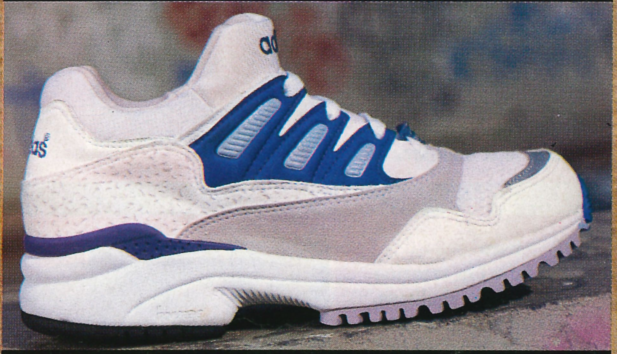
Nike Air Flare $100



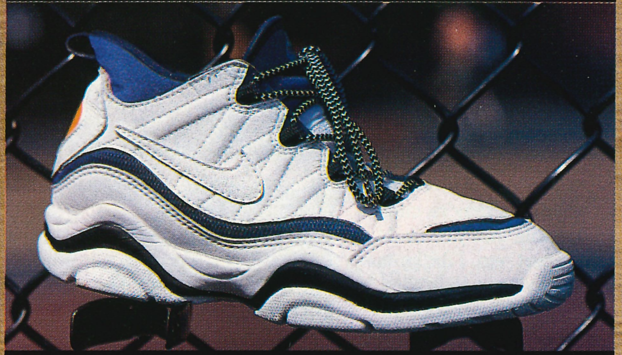
Fila Mind Bender $59.95



Avia 2050 plus $75



Adidas Womens' Allegra W $74.95



Nike Womens' Air Trainer Set $85

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Avia (800) 345-AVIA
Converse (800) 554-CONS
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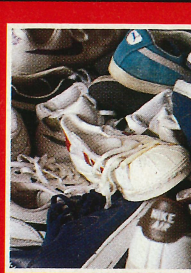
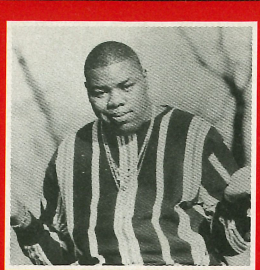
Reebok (800) 843-4444

just kickin' it

artists pick their favorite sneakers

COMPILED BY RICARDO

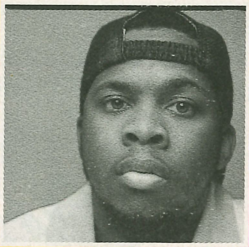


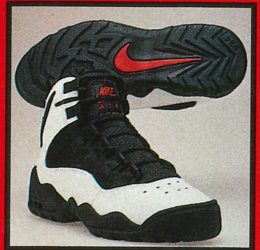


Biz Markie, owner of Olympic Winner sneaker store in Albee Square Mall in Brooklyn, NY: The flavor for this week is Chuck Taylors. The rest of Biz's closet on left.

Special Ed from Crooklyn Dodgers: My favorites are the classic cream Filas. Every time they get dirty I get a new pair.
(left) **MC Eiht**: I like to rock blue Nike Airs.

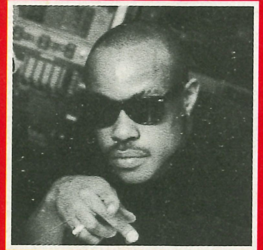
Phife from **A Tribe Called Quest**: John Starks's Intruder sneaker is my favorite. They're very comfortable for both walking and playing ball. My second favorite are the Dennis Rodmans in all black, they make your feet look mad small.





Da Brat: Dennis Rodmans. They black and make my feet look small, and they hella comfortable.

Guru from **GangStarr**: Right now I'm wearing Adidas shelltoes. They're my favorite 'cause of the style and comfort.

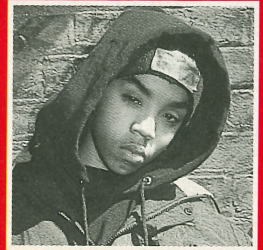


Masta Ace from Crooklyn Dodgers: Right now I'm wearing hi-top black shelltoes with white stripes. 'Cause it's a classic sneaker, it's timeless. I plan to have every color this summer.

Warren G: Nikes because they're comfortable and you could sport 'em. I'd like to have my own shoe, The Regulator.

Outkast
Big Boi: Adidas Equipments, Air Jordans.
Dre: Adidas Forum, Air Jordans.

Shyhiem: Barkleys, they fat and I like the colors. When they get dirty you can't tell.



Kurious: The new Barkleys, 'cause they're mad light, comfortable and snug. When I rock the mic I don't trip on cords like when I wear Tims.

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Simple! ... (You say) we think this is a revolutionary idea with an evolutionary concept!

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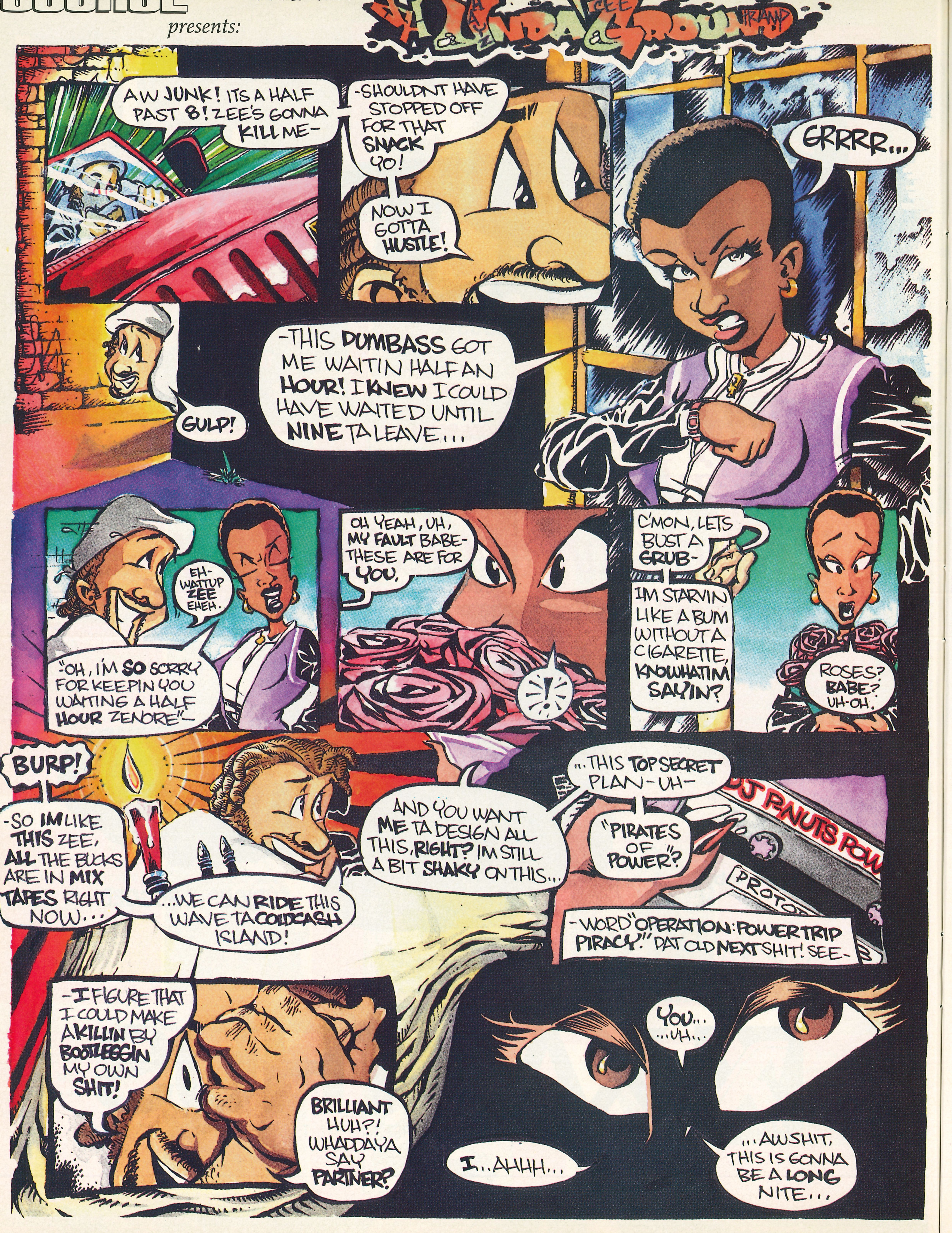

UNDAGROUND
AW JUNK! ITS A HALF PAST 8! ZEE'S GONNA KILL ME-
-SHOULDNT HAVE STOPPED OFF FOR THAT SNACK YO!
NOW I GOTTA HUSTLE!
GRRRR...
-THIS DUMBASS GOT ME WAITIN HALF AN HOUR! I KNEW I COULD HAVE WAITED UNTIL NINE TA LEAVE...
GULP!
EH-WATTUP ZEE EHEH.
"OH, I'M SO SORRY FOR KEEPIN YOU WAITING A HALF HOUR ZENORE"
OH YEAH, UH, MY FAULT BABE- THESE ARE FOR YOU.
!
C'MON, LETS BUST A GRUB-
IM STARVIN LIKE A BUM WITHOUT A CIGARETTE, KNOWHATIM SAYIN?
ROSES? BABE? UH-OH.
BURP!
-SO IM LIKE THIS ZEE, ALL THE BUCKS ARE IN MIX TAPES RIGHT NOW...
...WE CAN RIDE THIS WAVE TA COLDCASH ISLAND!
...THIS TOP SECRET PLAN-UH-
AND YOU WANT ME TA DESIGN ALL THIS, RIGHT? IM STILL A BIT SHAKY ON THIS...
"PIRATES OF POWER"?
DJ P.NUTS POW
PROTO
-"WORD" "OPERATION: POWER TRIP PIRACY." DAT OLD NEXT SHIT! SEE-
-I FIGURE THAT I COULD MAKE A KILLIN BY BOOTLEGGIN MY OWN SHIT!
BRILLIANT HUH?! WHADDAYA SAY PARTNER?
YOU... ...UH...
I...AHHH...
...AWSHIT, THIS IS GONNA BE A LONG NITE...

FLAVORS of the month

COMPILED BY KIERNA MAYO DAWSEY & JENNIFER WILLIAMS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DIRK WESTPHAL

nautica
INDIGLO
50 METERS
WATER RESISTANT

NAUTICA INDIGLO
Do what you do in the dark with the new Nautica Indiglo, the butter, diving-styled watch that has a complete glow-in-the-dark face. It's water resistant and it comes in green, black, yellow, orange and blue. You'll never again have to search for light to see what time it is. Available at most major department stores, $70.

SABOR WEAR
Martha Diaz's new clothing line, Sabor Wear, was designed to promote Latino awareness and pride. No matter where you're from: Puerto Rico, Domincan Republic, Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Colombia, or anywhere in the Latino diaspora, you should certainly feel this vibe. ¡Paz a toda la comunidad Hispana con mucho Sabor! Stuff available at Union, NYC and Los Angeles, and at Relief in Spanish Harlem.

Spanish Fly
Sabor
de sPicable!

HILFIGER BACK PACK
Perfect for wack stand up concerts, crowded trains, college campuses and the like, Tommy Hilfiger is blowing up with the napsack/folding chair from their new Army Surplus line. If it looks heavy, no problem, it's not. In fact this bag is a replica of actual military issue —it's quite light and practical. Available at most major department stores, $75.

OLD SKOOL GEAR
Old Skool is representin' the Old School with graffiti styled T-shirts and canvas carryall bags. yes, this is strictly an underground company, expect all types of hip-hop flavor. Call for a catalouge, (212) 795-1067.

THE MOTOROLA CORDLESS
The Motorola Secure Clear 550, protects your conversation from nosey homebodies by scrambling the transmitted signal. Features include an emergency battery backup, a handsfree speaker phone, a two-way paging intercom and digital security codes ensuring telephone privacy. But the bonus is that this phone lets you talk on it *static free* all the way around the corner from your house. Now you can play cellular and dial 900 numbers as much as you want. About $199, call for info, (800) 331-6456.

CLASSIC HITS
Mary Jane's a Superfreak. Run out now and get the Motown classic, "best of" collections by The Mary Jane Girls, Rick James and Teena Marie. Between them, enjoy tracks upon tracks of good music and even better memories. Who knows if we'll hear from any of them again. If you're a music lover, you'll know why these CDs are neccessary. Rick is $29.98 (double CD), Teena and Mary Jane and 'em are 11.98 each. Available wherever real music is sold.

MICRO-PHONE CHECK

DAYS OF WAYBACK

AHMAD

"On this one I was just kinda going for self," explains Ahmad, in reference to his just released album. His self-titled debut flexes a multitude of styles that explores the diversity of its 18-year-old author. With songs that strike a balance between positive social messages and having a good time, Ahmad is a far cry from your typical South Central stereotype. From battle rhymes and playful edutainment to his popular R&B-tinged single, "Back In The Day," Ahmad flows over the melodic hip-hop of his long-time homie, Kendal Gordy (son of the Motown legend).

Besides innovative music and guest vocals by funk legend Roger Troutman, Ahmad also parlays inventive lyrics and subject matter. A self-proclaimed skills-oriented rapper, he puts energy into his messages. His upcoming single "You Gotta Be. . ." is decidedly anti-gangster, and on "Ordinary People," he devotes an entire song, not just a shout-out, to the people who kept him off the streets, namely his mother and the rest of his family.

The Source: It's hella bold to come out against gangsterism. What made you do that?

Ahmad: I'm not trying to put none of my peoples down, 'cause I got a lot of friends who gangbang. I'm not totally against it, but I think it's nonsense, and I was not gonna make a record just condoning it. I think a lot of people are almost fearful to say, "I think what gangster rappers are talking about is wrong." But Ahmad, and I believe Giant Records has my back, we don't give a fuck. We're keeping it real regardless. And "real" is not putting 50 slugs in somebody's chest. "Real" is not drinking 40s. "Real" is the day-to-day life that Black folks live.

Why do you think the g-shit blew up so big?

Because when gangster rap came out it was something new. It was almost, like, funny, almost thrilling. Like, "Oh, that fool's stupid." But then people started to actually believe it. People use [the excuse], "Well, I'm a street reporter." But reporters a lot of the time say, "It's terrible how these fires are burning." They don't just say the fires are burning. I say, "It's terrible that gangbanging is going on." But fools try to cover it up and clear their conscience. But I'm the man saying, "Nope, you gotta pay for that. What you sow, you're gonna reap."

In the media they always talk about how people are pressured into gangbanging and grinding. How come you didn't get caught up?

See, this is a plug for hip-hop music. Hip-hop kept me out of that shit. Hip-hop was a positive force in my life, 'cause while other people were outside, I was too busy trying to get fresh—in the house, writing raps, trying to get my skills down, paying dues—to have time to fuck with that. I knew I had to go battle. I always battled at school. I lost many a battle trying to get my skills down pat. So that's what kept my mind off gangbanging. And you know, a strong family. My mother, my brother. My pops didn't live with me. But hip-hop music I would have to say is one of the main things that kept me off the streets.

When the single came out, a lot of people compared you to the Pharcyde. What do you think about that?

I got much respect for these brothers, so there's no way that we're gonna ever have beef. I'm not gonna dis them, but this is what I'm saying: I have not sounded like the Pharcyde and will not sound like the Pharcyde in my life because I have developed my own style and they developed their own styles—'cause there's many members of that group. The reason that people compare me to the Pharcyde is, first of all, I'm a new artist, so I got to be compared. OK, he has a high-pitched voice. OK, he's not B-Real. Not Souls of Mischief. OK, the Pharcyde. And it's bullshit. I'm Ahmad, doing what I do. Whoever got a problem with it, I can freestyle for days, we can battle, what you wanna do? People don't realize the difference between styles, they just listen to voices. Rap is all about styles.

So if you had to explain what Ahmad is all about, what would it be?

I would say, "South Central at its best." The positive aspects of South Central. You listen to my album, just uplifting songs, and you're like, "OK, all South Central is not just tore up."

What's been the best thing so far?

Being able to give my mother a job. She's my business manager.

JOSH LEVINE

DANCEHALL ROOT

TERROR FABULOUS

The hottest Jamaican deejay out the box got his name by terrorizing the competition. Nineteen-year-old Cecil Cambell (aka Terror Fabulous) started off chatting on the street corners of his hometown in St. Thomas, Jamaica, and wound up catching wreck with his first single, "Dorothy," for producer Dave Kelly. It's been a short ride to the top since then as the Fabulous one has toured Europe, Japan and the Caribbean, before finally touching down on these shores with his major label debut, *Yaga, Yaga* (East West), produced by Kelly and Bobby Digital. This could be the first US dancehall release that is just that—pure dancehall roots and no crossover. Despite the big buzz on him, Terror remains unfazed and at home in his new role, and is as lively and genuine a character as his music.

The Source: How long have you been chatting?

Terror Fabulous: This 'ting is from birt' because I have more family in the music business, but I guess I got a break when I was 14, 15 or so, but it wasn't on a sound system. I didn't start on a sound system, but on the corner where you hang out, yunno. I moved from there to the studio.

How did you initially hook up with Dave Kelly to do "Dorothy"?

Yeah, well, it was an engineer at Penthouse, go by the name of

Stumpy, he introduce me to Dave Kelly. That day, it was a Saturday, I could remember. I did three songs that day with Dave Kelly.

Briefly describe your rise to stardom.

Yeah, well, it didn't take long because I am conscious of what I'm doing. Dave Kelly's conscious. It jus' 'appen. It 'appen fast. People say it 'appen fast, but it 'appen fast with a good meaning behind it because the lyrics was strong, the riddims, everyting.

With so many deejays coming out of JA these days, what makes you unique?

Yeah, beca', you see, my style, yunno. 'Ow I put my lyrics and my words, you can understand and you can 'ear them and yunno, what it mean. Yeah. If you wanna break away from all these other deejays, your style have to be unique, and people have to 'ear what you're sayin'.

How did you get signed by East West?

Yeah, well, I guess I was in England at the time, at my first tour. "Mr. Big Man," that was a tune which give me a name, yunno. People began to know me first time. Then I get "Action," that got me signed. Because [when] that tune released in Jamaica, it's number one, believe me, and up here. That tune really got me.

Is there a backlash going on in Jamaica against all slackness and gun lyrics in dancehall similar to the backlash against gangsta rap in the U.S.?

Well, sometime the people come down hard on it, but as I said before, they won't stop make gun movie and they won't stop make blue movie, so I guess this whole 'ting won't stop. Dem thing was from birt', yunno, from Jesus Christ days, so it's like it's hard to stop.

But why is that the focus of a lot of dancehall?

Well, it's what you feel or what you see around you go on.

You have said that you don't consider yourself a gangster, so what is "Gangsters Anthem" all about?

Yeah, well, that tune, yunno, people keep on asking. That there's no gun, there's no violence. We're just trying to show that we put our gangster differently, OK, beca' we use our gangster like we on the corner, chilling out, drinking and having fun, playing music and all dem 'ting. We just term it that way. Some people term it different. Some hear 'bout gangster, dem say murder, wicked, and yunno? But we try to term it a different way.

What else do you like to talk about in your lyrics?

Well, I talk about 'nuff 'tings, yunno? 'Tings that 'appen around me, me talk about that. I don't know if you know this tune "Mr. Big Man." I touch the politicians, the man who abuse his wife and all dem 'ting, yunno? Yeah, I don't really stick on one 'ting, OK?

On many major label dancehall releases there is usually some crossover tunes that either fuse hip-hop or R&B. Why did you choose to keep your album strictly dancehall?

Well, I'm gonna give you a simple answer why I keep it dancehall root. They signed me to do reggae, not hip-hop. That's it. I'm in this to uplift reggae music, yunno. And to teach the youth's who coming behind, show them that reggae can do it, yunno?

S.H. FERNANDO JR.

FUNKY SENSATION

DA BRAT

Da Brat may be seen just kickin' it with her homies, Xscape, in Atlanta, but she makes sure all y'all know that Chicago is the city and the West is the side that she calls home. As the newest member of Jermaine Dupri's So So Def clan, Da Brat is carrying on the family tradition of success with her Chi-town brand of ghetto soul and her hit debut, "Funkdafied." After being "discovered" by Kris Kross (another JD project) at a concert in '92, everything fell into place like a dream come true. She met up with Dupri, they clicked, she signed, and they knocked out her debut album (even while he dealt with Xscape's double platinum release). As two Chicago females with a shared love of hip-hop, Brat and I talked like regular homies about past and present.

The Source: Tell me something about your background. How were you raised?

Da Brat: Well, I grew up on the West Side of Chicago. I was raised in the church and I was raised in the street. Now I want to clear something up. Some media people have a problem with me sayin' that I grew up in church and in the street. Now raised in the streets don't mean I was a fuckin' bum. Out here, we could just chill on the porch all night long. We could shoot craps on the corner, play double dutch, we be havin' boom boxes outside. It's just the ghetto, we just be kickin' it all night. That's what I mean about the street, not that I done lived in the streets with no food or whatever. And as far as me being raised in the church, well, one of my grandmothers was sanctified. So if I was in her house I had to go to church. I had to abide by her rules. And I still go to church every now and then to let them know I didn't forget where I came from. So to clear that up, muthafuckers don't seem to understand that you can do both at the same time.

So how did you decide to become a rapper? Especially comin' out of a church atmosphere?

While the other girls was in the choir, I was like the li'l star in church, 'cause I was the only bitch on the drums. Everybody be like, "Damn, that girl be tearin' up them drums!" And they gotta clap to you, gaddamit, 'cause you keep the beat. So anyways, at the time, I was sneakin', listenin' to the Beastie Boys, N.W.A, Slick Rick and all that, and I was lovin' that shit. But I had to sneak on my headphones. And I was playin' the drumbeats along with my tapes and writin' poems and rappin' in school. When I finally decided to be a rapper, some of my fam didn't like it, but they couldn't do shit about it. Now one of my grandmothers still don't know how deep I cuss and all that. But damn near everybody else know. And as long as I'm happy, it seem like they happy. And that's all together terrific.

I understand that you were approached by Teddy Riley and Michael Bivens, but nothing ever panned out? Are you glad that you ended up with Jermaine?

I just finna say, I thank God that it worked out for the better because Jermaine is like my idol and my big brother. Niggas don't know the extent of that nigga's talent. That nigga is a genius.

How was it working on the album with him? Did y'all create a concept first?

This album, we didn't do shit but bullshit and have fun, and it came together like it did. There ain't no muthafuckin' concept. I can't even lie and say, "Well, my message is. . ." I don't have no message, no gimmicks. I don't have shit. I'm just kickin' it from the 60644, that's the West Side. I'm tryin' to represent for Chicago and for everybody else that likes my music. If you a nerd and you like it, bump that shit. If you white, go ahead, enjoy it whoever you are.

How did you get your name?

All my life, if I wanted something, I just had to get it. I'm an only child, so everybody would spoil me. When I was little, I got the dopest bike. I had all the new gym shoes. And so other kids would just hate me. "That spoiled brat!" That's all I heard. Even now, "You ain't nothin' but a brat!" You damn skippy! I wear that shit like a badge of honor. Da Brat, gaddamit, that's right. Lettin' all y'all muthafuckers know, I'm tryin' to get what I want.

MINYA OH

PALACE AMUS-ME

RADIOACTIVE

Do you still think "radio suckers" ignore hip-hop? Listen to this: a new wave of radio stations across the country is discovering that playing rap means success.

BY PISTOL PETE

A **sexy-sounding female** named Kelly from Manhattan calls into the morning show of New York City's Hot 97 with a stunning revelation. "I slept with Puff Daddy. He is lacking in size and action." In the macho world of rap, the rep Puff has worked so hard to create as a playboy and rap industry player (the man behind Jodeci, Mary J. Blige and Big) is now at stake. After all, you can't be the man if everybody in New York thinks your bedroom skills are weak. Loving every minute of this are the show's hosts, who proudly bill themselves as "Two Muslims and a Jew," but in actuality are none other than rap/MTV icons Ed Lover and partner Dr. Dre, now working as radio DJs along with veteran NYC air personality Lisa G.

They howl with laughter, as do in-studio guests The Pharcyde. After the caller adds for emphasis that Puff is "wickety. . . wickety. . . wack," it's only minutes before Puff is on the phone clearing his name.

Ed Lover: Yo Puff, what's that all about, man?

Puff Daddy: First of all, I don't even know who that is. I couldn't recognize the voice, and I don't know no girl named Kelly.

Ed: So that's a fan. . . with a fantasy?

Puff: It sounds like an enemy to me, dawg.

Ed: Why you think somebody would call up and make something like that up about you, Puff?

Puff: I don't know baby, but check it out though. I'm a Scorpio, you know I love women. . . and believe me baby, if I did make love to her, and my [bleep] couldn't do the job, I ain't got no problem with my [bleep].

With a laid back tone of voice, Puff has squashed the chatter. Gleefully, the hosts introduce the next record, "Passin' Me By," and the morning rolls on.

That such a candid, hip-hop inspired scenario could be played out on the morning show of a high-profile radio station in the world's #1 market is nearly unbelievable when you consider that just a short while ago, even hearing a rap song on the radio was an event in some cities. But the days of radio treating rap as the official leper of the entertainment industry are over. Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR) stations on both coasts, as well as in the Midwest and South, are "discovering" hip-hop and racking up listeners with playlists consistently hovering at or near 50 percent rap. Even Black/Urban formatted stations, historically very apathetic towards rap, are increasing the amount of hip-hop on their playlists, having finally come to the conclusion that some Black adults actually do like the music. (Hey, those pioneer hip-hop fans of the '70s and '80s had to grow up some time, right?)

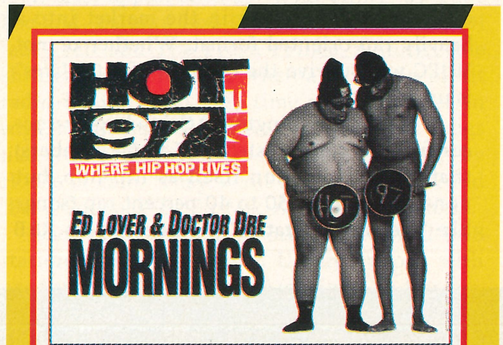
Of course, Black radio does get credit for originating the rap specialty show, a block of programming featuring DJs who spin exclusively hip-hop. These shows—inspired by pioneers such as Red Alert, Mr. Magic, Chuck Chillout, Marley Marl and Lady B—have been an essential component of the industry since the early '80s. Nowadays, "mix shows" that focus on rap music can be found in nearly every market. However, in most cases, the Black stations that carry these specialty shows have failed to program rap records in their regular rotation.

It is CHR stations such as Hot 97 (WQHT), Power 106 (KPWR) in Los Angeles, and KMEL in San Francisco that are standing at the forefront of the rap radio movement. (These stations are sometimes identified as "churban" within the radio industry for their hybrid mix of the Top 40 and Urban formats). This new breed of radio station is likely to be blaring "On and On" by Shyheim or "You Know How We Do It" by Ice Cube when your alarm clock goes off at seven o'clock in the morning. A wide range of listeners—from hard-core to casual rap fans, Black, white and Latino, male and female—are eating it up. The stations sit perched among the top echelon of their respective markets, according to local figures released from Arbitron, the company that measures radio ratings.

In New York City, embracing hip-hop has propelled Hot 97 away from the mediocre ratings they used to get airing mostly club and dance tunes. The station now enjoys a top ten ranking in a city with almost 50 radio stations. More importantly, they've recently climbed within two-tenths of a ratings point of their longtime rivals, Black radio institutions WRKS (98.7 Kiss) and WBLS (107.5). Hot 97 program director (PD) Steve Smith feels the reason for the station's success is simple. "Hip-hop is the music of choice among the 18 to 24 year-old audience and we have every intention of giving the audience what they want."

Hot 97 is a veritable hip-hop machine. The phrase "where hip-hop lives" is uttered during every mic break and every station announcement. Anchored by the turntables of Funkmaster Flex, who skillfully spins current and classic hip-hop every night of the week, the station works rap into all aspects of its programming. Station promotions regularly involve rap acts, and drop-ins from underground heroes such as GangStarr, Wu-Tang Clan and Black Moon appear continuously. The station takes advantage of its location in the city of hip-hop's birth by having frequent guests from the hip-hop community drop by and record special announcements. Hot 97 even hired The Furious Five to host a "Mic Check Show" where listeners match freestyle skills with the Old School legends. This long overdue commitment to hip-hop is a breath of fresh air in a market where rap has ruled the streets for years, and many listeners—including the rap artists themselves—have welcomed the new format.

It's important to understand that calling these stations "rap" or "hip-hop" is not to imply that listeners are hearing 24 hours of non-stop rap songs. "You have to break it up," says Hot 97 music director Tracy Cloherty.



"No one wants to listen to one kind of music all the time. We break up the rap by playing really strong ballads, because people still like that music. We still play regular house music and dance music because it's a viable sound and a lot of it is compatible. And the same with reggae, which I think is about to bust open wide. They're balance records." Even the non-rap jams (from artists such as R. Kelly, Janet Jackson and Zhane) sound great when interwoven with the station's total hip-hop package.

The ever-changing tastes of rap fans do have an effect on programming decisions. While common methods of radio research are necessary, they're not always the final word. Says Smith of Hot 97, "Research is done every week to test our music. We couple that with sales information and phone requests. We also look at everything from 12-inch info, sales info, and in-house research. All that stuff is used along with our gut and our vibe of what is going on in the street to determine what to play. We're not always going to look at research to determine whether or not we play a very powerful underground record. A good example is Jeru The Damaja, who has a real strong street appeal in New York."

KMEL-FM in San Francisco is a CHR standout (Arbitron rated #2 among all listeners 12 and older) with a playlist of about 50 percent rap. According to station research coordinator Alex Mejia, "there's so much new rap out there, we want to make sure we're playing the right cuts for our station. A record that has a buzz in New York may not necessarily work in our marketplace. For instance, the Wu-Tang Clan, everyone loves them without a doubt. But when 'Method Man' was dropping really big on the East Coast, we were plugging off the Conscious Daughters and Masta Ace out here."

Rap flavor rules at KMEL, home of the nationally-recognized "Sway and King Tech Wake Up Show"—the weekly rap show for "people who are brain dead to hip-hop." Like Hot 97, the station plays rap in all dayparts (DJ shifts) and doesn't shy away from hard-hitting gangsta rap. "What may sound negative to somebody is actually positive here at KMEL," says Mejia. "Right now, rap is angry. If we didn't play some of those records,

ISA BRITO

ED LOVER AND DR. DRE KEEP THE MORNINGS COOKING AT NEW YORK'S HOT 97: ON THE AIR (BELOW); IN A CONTROVERSIAL, AND REVEALING, AD CAMPAIGN (ABOVE) we'd be closing the mouths of our youth."

"We inform people what's happening on a national level as far as new music, new slang, new trends and the history and classics of hip-hop," says host MC Sway. In fact, the show became so popular that last month, Sway and Tech, along with fellow programmer Joe Quixx, began a regular air shift on Los Angeles CHR station KKBT. Now they spread hip-hop flavors up and down the West Coast, with a version of the Wake Up Show on Fridays in San Francisco and on Saturdays in Los Angeles.

Like Hot 97, LA's Power 106 is owned by Emmis Broadcasting, but that's not necessarily why PD Rick Cummings calls his station a "West Coast version" of Hot. Their own hip-hop morning show, hosted by the popular Baka Boyz, is full of rap records, news and traffic reports over rap beats, and bits like the "At Work Roll Call," which gives listeners the opportunity to rap live, on air, over the instrumentals to popular cuts such as Snoop's "Ain't No Fun." Like its East Coast sister station, Power 106 hits the streets for research. "We spend a lot of time in underground clubs," says Cummings. "Our whole purpose is to find new records and see what ones are going to blow up big."

KKBT "The Beat" is Power 106's chief competition in Los Angeles. Their recent hiring of Sway and Tech should only intensify the battle. Naturally, both stations live in the hip-hop shadow of KDAY, the city's now-defunct 24-hour AM rap station which, without warning, went off the air for good in March of 1991.

KING TECH, JOE QUIXX AND MC SWAY BROUGHT THEIR "WAKE UP SHOW" FROM SUCCESS AT KMEL IN SAN FRANCISCO TO KKBT IN LOS ANGELES

Carrying the torch for KDAY now is Chicago's WJPC 950, a two-year-old 24-hour rap station on the Windy City's AM dial. "We give it to 'em straight up, no chasers," says station midday air personality First Lady. "R&B is a chaser." Though the station has recently dropped in the ratings, community support remains strong, and the station regularly pumps underground rap from both coasts (Tupac, Wu-Tang, old Brand Nubian, Anotha Level, Outkast, Warren G). At press time, reports surfaced that plans were in the works for station owner Barry Mayo to convert an FM station in the market into a heavily rap-oriented format. Whether or not WJPC will survive the creation of "103 Jams" is unclear.

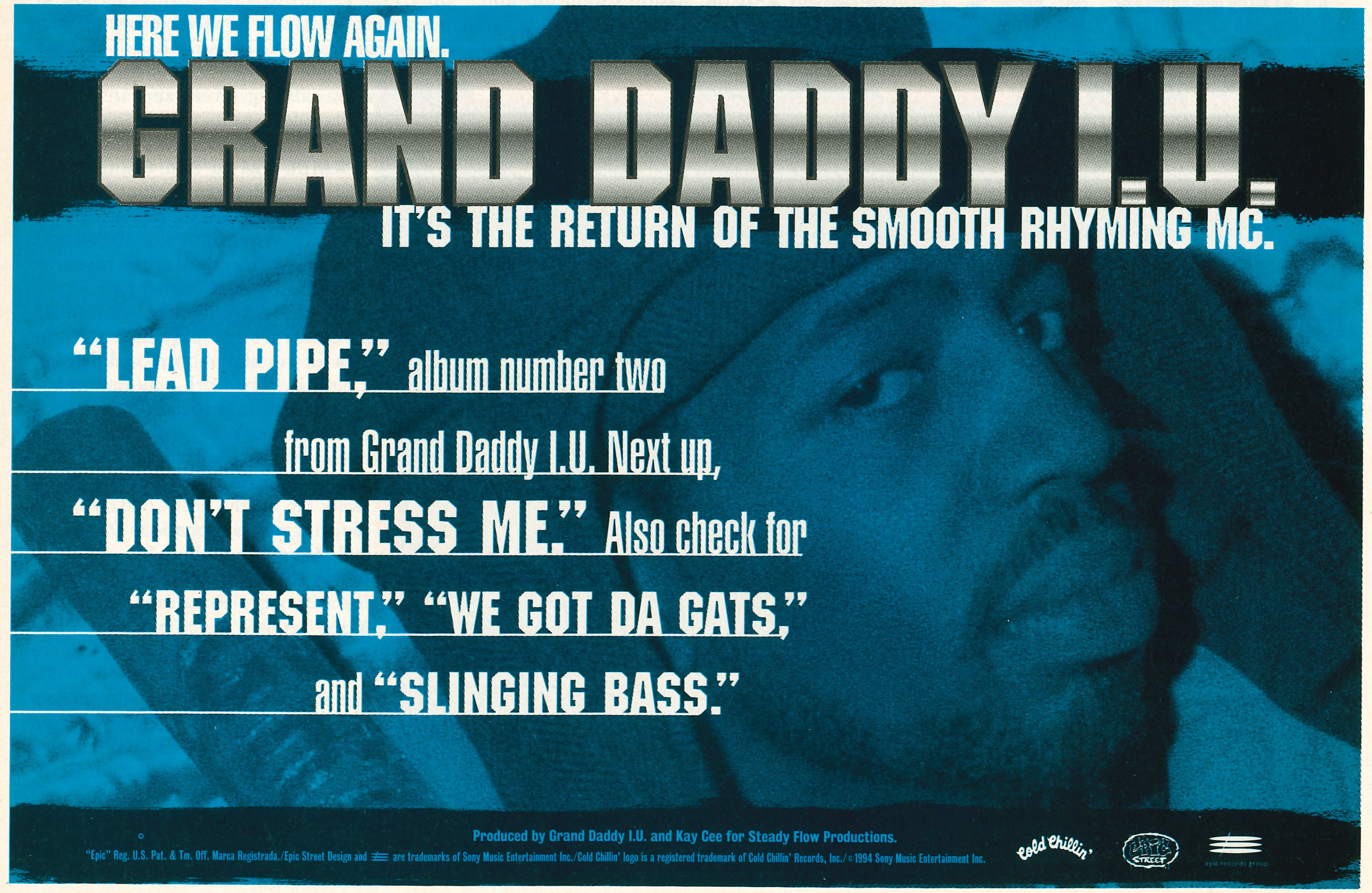
WPGC in Washington D.C. is a hugely-successful CHR station (stellar 25 to 54 numbers) that doesn't position itself as hip-hop, but nonetheless plays 30 to 40 percent rap (songs like "Electric Relaxation" by Quest), plus R&B and go-go cuts. Station afternoon air personality Mike Love (formerly PD at WBLS in New York) says new school CHR stations playing rap have leeway that traditional Black-owned radio stations could never expect. "When a station like Hot 97 plays a record that has 'bitch' in it, they might get complaint letters, but it's not taken as a priority one situation because the owners are somewhere else. They're not bumping into anybody on 125th Street that's known them all their lives, whereas the majority of Black stations are owned by people who are in the community."

It is impossible to forget the strained, shaky relationship the CHR and Black/Urban formats have shared with rap over the years. Actually, the path CHR has taken with rap has been predictable, one based on hits and the taste of the mainstream audiences the format serves. The late '80s represented the first time rap significantly made it to the CHR airwaves. Unlike today, airplay was given strictly to songs with high mass appeal such as "Wild Thing" by Tone Loc and "Parents Just Don't Understand" by DJ Jazzy Jeff and The Fresh Prince. A noticeable shift occurred in 1992, when a new crop of hit radio-friendly rap, this time a little harder in edge, began showing up on CHR playlists. Songs like "Jump" by Kris Kross, "Jump Around" by House of Pain, "They Want Efx" by Das EFX and "Baby Got Back" by Sir Mix-A-Lot come to mind.

Black radio, including both Black-owned R&B stations and white-owned Urban stations with predominately African-American audiences, deserves little credit for the success and growth rap has achieved in its 15 to 25 year life span. Even today, a few of these stations still use the fact that they don't play rap as a selling point to attract listeners. In the late '80s, animosity between Black radio and rap reached its peak, crystallized by Chuck D in the classic Public Enemy song "Don't Believe The Hype": "Radio suckers never play me/ On the mix, they just OK me." As time has passed, it has become clear that rap music has won its battle with radio.

Now, Black and Urban stations have increased the amount of rap they play, albeit with some limitations. ""Rap is currently being supported if it's a big enough record, but they won't break new songs," says Sincere, senior national director of rap promotions for the Polygram label group. "The rap they play in the daytime, when people are listening to the radio at work, is going to be well-known rap. Urban stations do what you call 'lifestyle programming' for the average adult. If they play an Onyx record, and they're trying to hit an older audience, there'll be a tune-out factor. They're not going to play that record."

The reasoning behind Urban radio's new acceptance of rap is clearly related to pressure from CHR stations baiting the same pool of listeners. In New York, WBLS, which only recently made national news by publicly banning gangsta rap, has hired underground favorite DJ Premier to spin every week. Meanwhile, Kiss has given a regular air slot to rapper Supernatural—winner of the 1993 New Music Seminar MC battle and now signed to East West—who freestyles live



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While the CHR stations playing rap are pulling successful overall ratings of listeners 12 and older, that doesn't automatically translate into profits. Four times a year, stations purchase an expensive ratings book from the Arbitron company that breaks down the listener patterns into daypart, hour-by-hour and age demo categories. These are the actual numbers used by stations to set ad rates, and by advertising media buyers to determine where and when to buy airtime.

If a station's numbers are too heavily inflated with teenagers and kids, that will limit the advertising sources to products such as sneakers and soft drinks. In reaching a young audience only, the station won't be able to command sufficient ad dollars from companies seeking to reach radio's "money" demographics, persons 18 to 24, 25 to 34, and especially those aged 25 to 54. Fear of this dilemma by station management is a primary reason that radio has shunned rap over the years. But the new rap-oriented stations show signs of versatility. KMEL, according to station sales manager Dan Haight, is particularly successful at attracting the right numbers. "We cover this incredible spectrum," he says. "Think about appealing to a 32-year-old male and a 15-year-old female at the same time. I mean, that's phenomenal."

Of course, another burden facing radio stations that play rap is overcoming the stereotypical negativity associated with hip-hop. The reality is that in a violent society, rappers facing criminal charges who justly or unjustly appear on the front pages of newspapers can scare off potential advertising dollars. While KMEL's Haight doesn't dismiss that theory, he has a definite opinion on its roots: "I've found more often it has to do with somebody's own personal taste than it does with any sort of corporate dictate that says, 'There shall be no advertising for this product on stations that play gangsta rap'."

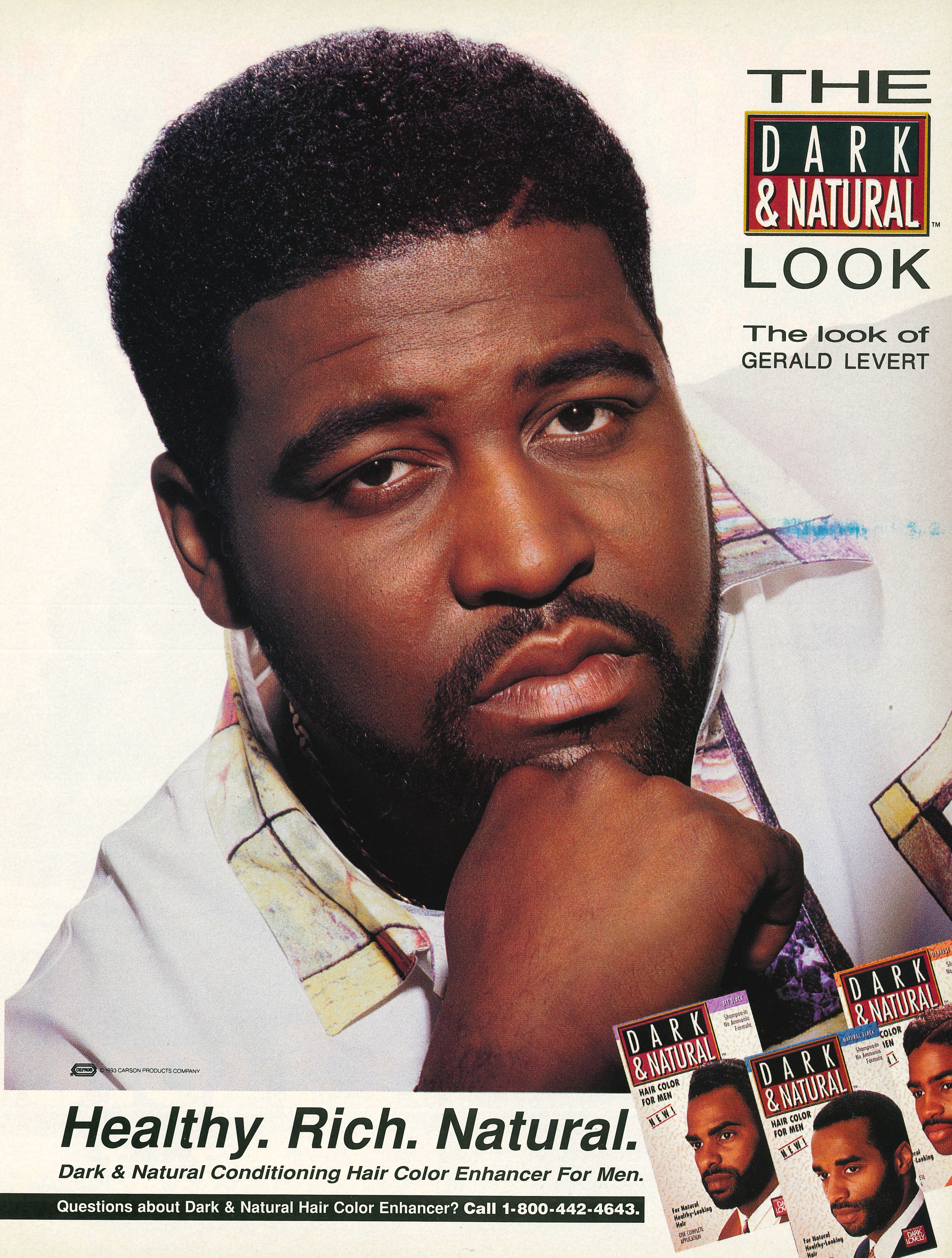
Station sales staffs that are truly committed to rap and can aggressively sell it to media buyers will take care of the misguided perceptions that go on behind closed doors. Their success, however, depends largely on the quality of the on-air product. A large step in that direction was taken by Hot 97 in their hiring of Ed Lover and Dr. Dre for the morning show—radio's most vital daypart.

Smith says Hot 97 liked the fact that the duo didn't have a lot of experience. "The hip-hop style is a little looser, a little less structured and not so radio-tight," he explains. "We wanted a morning show that sounded like a hip-hop party, where the hottest hip-hop artists and celebrities show up every day."

Compatibility is a key here. Dre knows when to step aside and let Ed's wild antics and personality explode, and Ed knows who's running things every morning when Dre steps into a side studio for the "Traffic Jam," which showcases 30 minutes of live mixing. What's not working out, at least for Dre, is the apparent havoc the morning shift can cause a person's life. "I'm sick of these hours," he tells me between songs during a visit to the show. "Every Saturday and Sunday morning no matter what, I'm up at two-thirty, three o'clock in the morning. I mean, you're sleepin' with a woman but you're up at three o'clock watching TV. She's like, 'What's the matter?' I'm like, 'Nothin!' "

Turn on your radio today and hear KRS-One dropping freestyle rhymes, or Snoop Doggy Dogg flexing live skills. Wait a moment, and you might hear the latest GangStarr, or that fat new one from Ahmad. Hip-hop is on the air and in your earhole, but this should shock no hip-hop loyalists. Rap records sell tremendously, and the music's still-increasing fan base constantly demands the newest and the fattest. It seems obvious that radio stations would strive for the attention of this devoted mass of listeners. Expect more stations to hop on the bandwagon and copy the format crafted by Hot 97, Power 106 and KMEL. We're now in an era where radio needs hip-hop much more than hip-hop needs radio. Ⓢ

Obviously, the stations mentioned in this piece are by no means the only radio outlets where hip-hop receives notoriety and props. Special shouts go out to: Red Alert at WRKS, Awesome 2 at WNWK and Stretch Armstrong & Bobbito at WKCR in New York; Colby Colb's "Radioactive" at WUSL in Philadelphia; DJ Polo at WQMG, K Nice at WJMH and Prince Ice at WWDM in North Carolina; Melle Mel at WAMO in Pittsburgh; Nasty Nes at KCMU in Seattle; DJ Law & Heart Attack at WOWI and Stormin' Norman at WCDX in Richmond; Eazy Ice at WPEG in Charlotte; Fred "The Jammer" at WZAK in Cleveland; Frankski at WXYZ in Norfolk; Icy Dee at WIZF in Cincinnatti; Doug Lazy at WPGC in Washington, DC; Warren Peace in KUNV in Las Vegas, Jason Staten at WDBM in Lansing; Ryan Cameron at WVEE and Randall Talib and G-Wiz at WRAS in Atlanta; Rhythm Rocker at WDNA in Miami; and DJs everywhere who fill the dial with the real stuff.



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BRONX BOMBERS

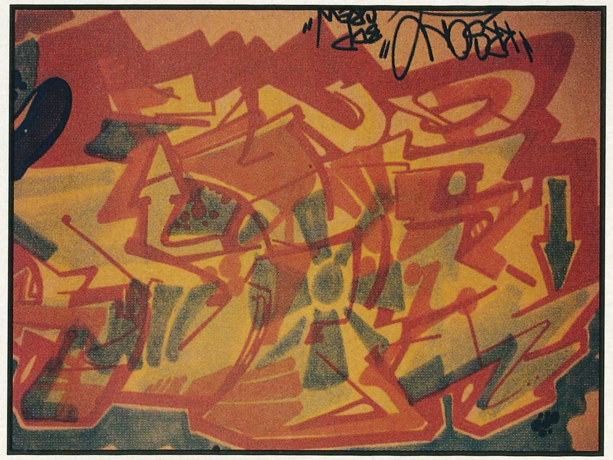
JOE AND KRIS HANG IN FRONT OF A 'CRACK' PIECE IN THE BRONX HALL OF FAME

Fat Joe, KRS-One and The Source get open on a bombing mission in the borough that started it all.

BY CHINO

So we're rolling up the FDR in Fat Joe's MPV with thirty cans of Rustoleum on board—four heads from The Source and his man Uncle Dan on the first leg of a bombing mission. Da Fat Gangsta speaks up from the driver's seat, accompanying the beats:"Is that how you're going to start your story, by saying we were driving around in Joe's ride looking for a place to bomb?"

As we pass a graffiti-drenched area near the 125th Street exit, Joe turns and says, "Damn, I want to catch that wall!" Minutes later, we reach the 3rd Avenue Bridge and enter the Bronx. Driving along the Bruckner Expressway, Joe points out a giant Crack piece on the top portion of a nearby building that catches the attention of passing motorists like a billboard. "I did that last night," he boasts.



A VINTAGE, WILD STYLE KRS-ONE TAG—MAKING A MARK WITH MARKERS

Venturing further into the Bronx, Joe explains, "I never wanted to tell people I wrote Crack. I thought they'd try and sue me for all the damage I've done. When I was younger, I used to get thrown out of every school for graffiti. I got thrown out of like ten schools for graffiti. I just couldn't stop, the shit was addictive. I used to steal the erasers from the chalk boards in school, put them on an empty roll-on filled with ink made from Rexograph paper soaked in alcohol and it was on. My shit was on some old total destruction shit, coming home with purple hands."

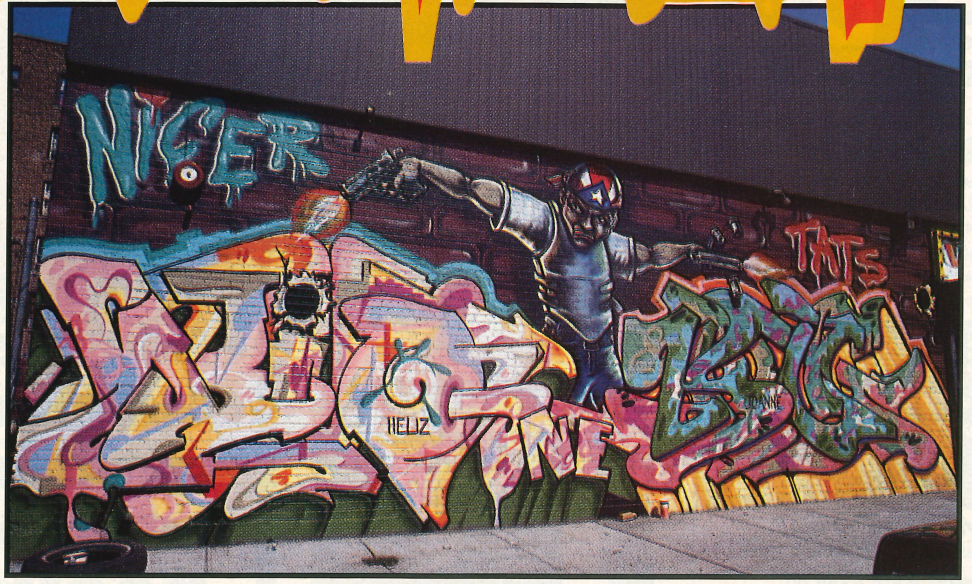
The first stop of the night comes when Joe pulls up to a wall painted by members of the TAT Crew. Burners by BG 183 and Bio with bullet holes through the letters surround a character freaked by Nicer. Back on the road, Joe takes us to Forest Projects, where he grew up—apparent by the love those around the way show for the man. "Forest Projects, home of many players and graffiti artists. Even Phase II came out of Forest Projects," Joe explains. He points to a mural across the street from the PJs which reads In Memory of Tony. "That was my man," he says, explaining why the mural is on the back cover of Joe's album *Represent*.

A quick couple of calls on Joe's cellular and we're on route to the Bronx Hall of Fame to meet Bio, BG 183 and a certain hip-hop legend with a long-time interest in graffiti. Creeping past the projects in Joe's whip, he seems to be in tune with those in his community, pointing out who's who in his South Bronx neighborhood. As we reach the Bronx Hall of Fame, there's no need to find parking, as Joe drives past the gates into a dimly-lit school yard. Cruising slowly in order to take in all the sights, the first thing that catches my attention is a silver top-to-bottom style TAT piece, standing 20 feet high and the length of a small bus. As we drive deeper into the concrete courtyard, we encounter elaborate, impressive pieces by BG 183, Bio, Nicer, Cope II, Notch, Beyond and Crack. One entire wall, the length of a football field, is covered with artwork.

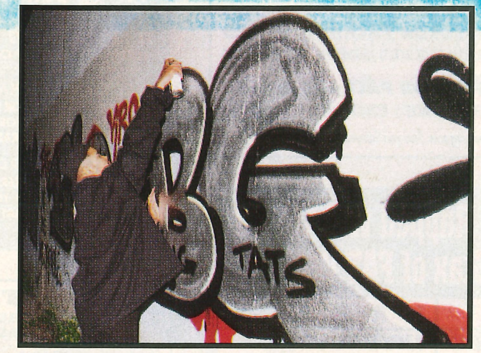
Exiting the car, I ask Joe how he got the tag Crack in the first place. "Man, I've been writing Crack long before the drug came out." So why the name? "I've always been a fat nigga. Every time I used to sit down and then stand up the crack of my ass used to show, so niggas used to be like, 'Yo crack!' They used to call me Joey Crack."

Joe recalls the early days of his graf experiences. "Back in the days I used to have to sneak out my house at like one or two in the morning to go hit Esplanade [a Bronx train yard]. I'd catch the 5, 2 and 6 train there. My first lay up was Woodlawn Avenue in the Bronx, on the 6 line. I've bombed Morris Park, Zerega. I can't front, niggas used to be afraid of Cap-MPC. He was in his twenties when we was like eleven or twelve. That motherfucker was whippin' niggas' asses."

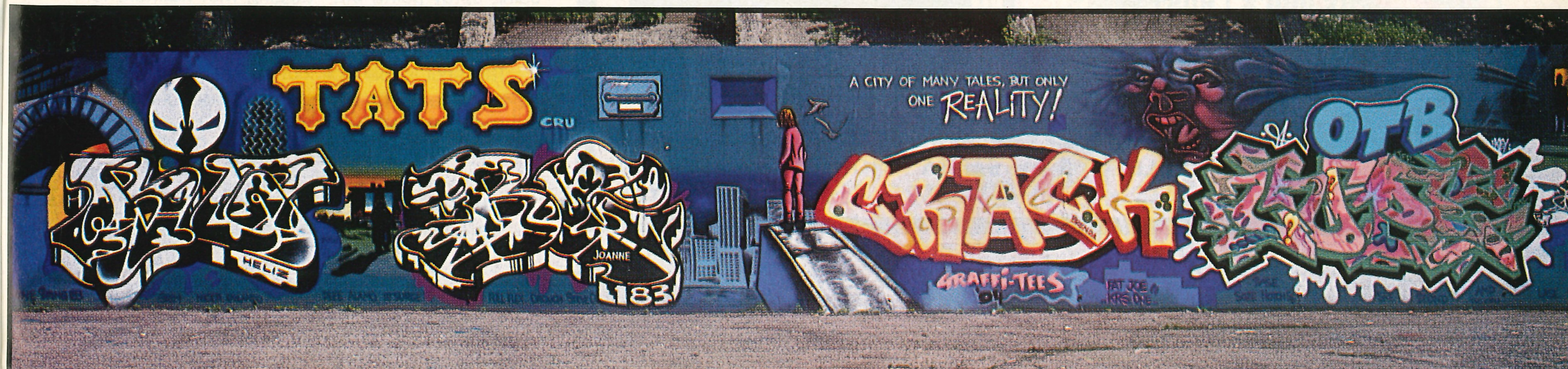
Joe admits he's been caught for graffiti twice. The first time was



BIO
TATS
GRAFFI TEES



ABOVE: BURNERS BY BIO AND BG 183, CHARACTER FREAKED BY NICER **MIDDLE:** ON A MISSION—BIO, BG, CRACK AND KRS-ONE GET OPEN ON THE HANDBALL COURTS **BELOW:** A FAT TAT CREW WALL IN THE BRONX HALL OF FAME FEATURING PIECES BY BIO, BG, CRACK AND COPE 2—OUT TO BOMB



LEFT PAGE: TOP PHOTO CHI MODU•BOTTOM T. ERIC MONROE THIS PAGE: TOP & BOTTOM T. ERIC MONROE•MIDDLE 4 CHI MODU

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for bombing trains, and last year he was caught by the Vandal Squad while bombing the highways. The Vandal Squad is a department within the Transit Police designed to capture graffiti writers in the act. "They said, 'You've been caught by the infamous Vandal Squad,'" he remembers. "I told them, 'Suck my dick motherfucker. Give me my fine and let me be on my way.'"

A white car brings BG 183 and Bio to the scene—two Latinos from the Boogie Down whose contribution to graf has been consistent over the last decade. "So what you want, player?" Joe asks in greeting. "What's up? Peace!" they say as they exit their ride. The air is warm, the cans are cracked, and everyone starts doing throw-ups on any empty wall space to break the ice.

Kris nods his head in approval and offers a spontaneous joke. "Aahh, that came out fat—Joe!"

From the darkest corner of the schoolyard a lone figure appears, taking long strides from the shadows. As he comes into the light, we see it is KRS-One with a black cap and a bag of paint over his shoulder. The Blastmaster greets the graf crew with pounds and hugs. As he walks towards the far end of the schoolyard, he acknowledges the recent collaboration piece by BG, Bio, Cope and Crack. The names are intricately lettered in black-and-white, with intense images of urban despair in the background. Kris nods his head in approval and offers a spontaneous joke. "Aahh, that came out fat—Joe."

Of course, KRS is no stranger to graf. "I bumped into my man that just got out and he was telling me about a time he and KRS-One were bombing and got chased by the police," Joe says. "He said KRS was running, fell down, got up and started doing the dip."

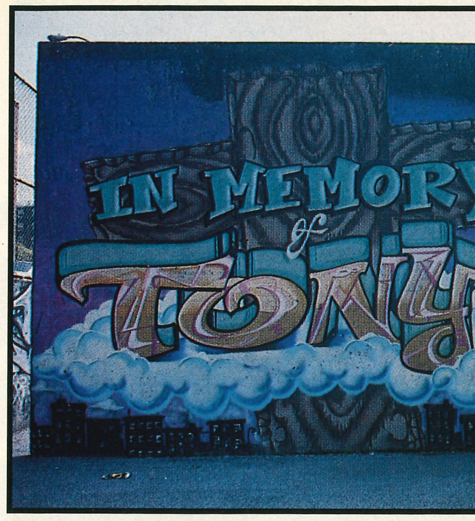
KRS replies, "Word, I was outta there." Kris gets into the action and puts finishing touches on a KRS-One tag. As he writes, Kris says he enjoys using spray paint, but "tagging with markers is really my shit. I can fuck shit up more with markers."

This spot is real nice, but we're all getting a little antsy, ready for a bigger challenge. Joe yells, "Any of y'all know any handball courts we could throw up terrible?"

"Yeah, Crotona Park!"

"Word, let's do this!"

We pack up the paint and everyone jumps back in their rides. After a short drive we reach the outskirts of Crotona Park. Bags of spraypaint in hand, we troop into a dark, wooded area. The light from the street becomes dimmer and dimmer as we march further along a path lined by trees and grass. We are approaching a Park Department office on the other side of a lake when someone says, "Shhh, don't make no noise, there are people working in there at night." The only sounds that can be heard are those of the rattling spray cans as Joe whispers, "I'm going to bomb that shit on the way out." We reach our final destination, the Crotona Park handball courts.



T. ERIC MONROE

ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE FOREST PROJECTS STANDS A "RESI IN PIECE" TRIBUTE WALL FOR JOE'S MAN TONY DONE BY BIO, BG183, NICER AND BRIM

There's a fence around the courts along with a chain and padlock on the entrance. In a matter of seconds the minor problem has been solved, as someone finds a hole in the fence and we pile in one by one. The courts are massive concrete structures—six long rows with four courts on each, and not a single tag on any of them; well, not yet. What little light we had was provided by the moon and a couple of lamp posts. As a bright light suddenly pops on we all stop in our tracks. But the light then fades to black; it was only the bulb in one lamp post flickering on and off. Although it was a false alarm, it was just enough to keep the old heart pounding. The Blastmaster removes a can of Krylon from his bag and attacks. The vibe seems to be contagious as Bio, BG and Joe waste no time finding just the right spot to start their pieces.

The pre-painting rituals have begun and the process is underway: the selection of paint colors, first outline, fill in, outline, highlights, background color and designs. The generically-manufactured spray caps are removed and replaced with spray nozzles that can produce a width four or five times wider or thinner than that of the factory cap. The smell of spraypaint fills the night air and I must admit it's got me open. I find myself taking tags and doing throw-ups side by side with KRS-One. I ask him, "So how did you hook up with Fat Joe and the TAT Crew?"

"We originally did a video together, for 'Duck Down.' Bio, BG 183, Brim, Shame, Easy, Cope II and Tekay-TNR. We filmed it at the Bronx Hall of Fame."

"When did you first recognize graffiti?"

"In 1983, about the time Run-DMC came out. I first started taking tags around my group home and started branching out, one block in one direction and two blocks in another. The name KRS comes from 'Krisna,' which used to be my middle name. So years ago, I used to write KRS but there were people writing names like Kress, KS, KR, so I started writing KRS-One and it jumped off to a whole new level."

Joe yells, "Tell him about when you used to bomb the buses!"

KRS continues, "I used to like bombing the bus yards, setting shit off with homemade markers with eraser tips."

"I know one thing," Joe says. "Every club I perform at there's at least one KRS-One tag in it." Joe launches into an explanation of how KRS has long been his idol, the man he most looks up to in hip-hop. "I remember back in the days, I used to sit on the benches outside the projects 'till like six in the morning with my boys, getting drunk and battling each other with *his* rhymes!"

Fat Joe and company are almost finished with their pieces. Joe steps back from the wall to check out his work as BG and Bio add white highlights and red drips to their silver and black creations. WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE is what Bio writes beneath his tag as Joe adds drips to his piece. Bio picks up a can and starts doing back-to-back throw ups until he reaches the end of the wall. He must have rocked at least ten throw ups in a row. "Throw ups are my favorite thing to do," says Joe, watching with approval.

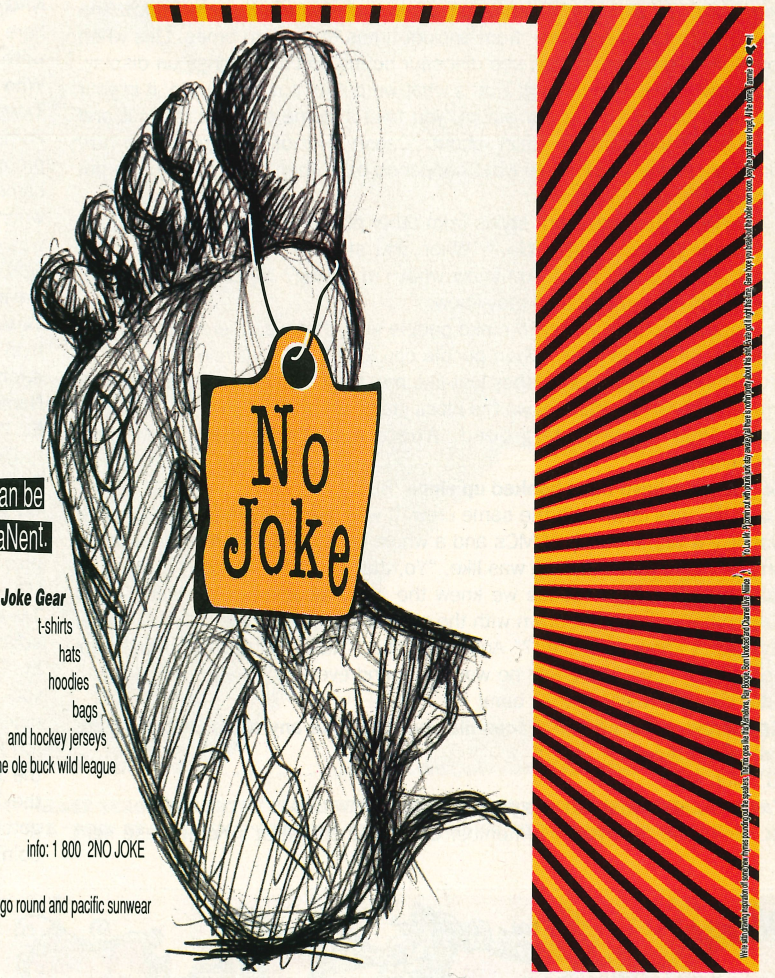
As our evening comes to a close, Fat Joe, Bio, BG and KRS group together in the midst of all the empty cans to pose for flicks in front of their finished pieces. As the flash bulb goes off, an intense burst of light crashes through the dark woods—a telltale sign that something unusual is going down on the handball courts. No problem, the bombing mission has been accomplished.

"A question for both of you," I say. "How long do you see yourself bombing?"

"Forever," Joe answers immediately.

"I don't see myself quitting any time soon," KRS agrees. "By the time this article comes out there will be a couple of parking lots I will have already hit."

"Bring back the trains!" Joe exclaims, his voice loud and echoing through the park, but by now nobody cares anymore. "Keep graffiti alive!" Ⓢ



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BOMBING BEDROCK

Artifacts catch fame with rhyme skills and respect for the origins of hip-hop

by Bönz Malone

F—k the Flintstones! There's a new "Bedrock" in town with a crew that's been down since the days of the ancient pyramids. Straight from the underground club scene of "Bricktown" (Newark) New Jersey, comes El the Sensai and Tame One of the Artifacts—one of the first legitimately skilled hip-hop crews that still bomb the subways.

Rollin' with the FC crew, they've got shit runnin' on the graffiti tip and ain't afraid to speak on it. Their debut album, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, appearing on Big Beat Records, captures a time and a place where B-boys were breakin', graffiti covered the trains, and MCs battled for equipment.

TAME AND EL THE SENSAI KEEP ALL ASPECTS OF HIP-HOP ON LOCK

The Source: What did you guys initially want to be? Did you have a certain field within hip-hop that you wanted to go into?

Tame One: I just wanted to be notorious.

El The Sensai: Word. In high school, I rhymed but it was on the L. Then when I hooked up with him, people was like, "Yo, you rhyme?" And from there people started to know the name.

So who came up with Artifacts?

El: It's just like when you lookin' back at your ancestors tryin' to find your roots or whatever. Artifacts is the three basic elements in hip-hop, which is breakdancing, graffiti and rap music. That's the foundation, you gotta start from there. To build an album or anything, that's where it comes from. The word "Artifacts" is anything from ancient times to modern times. Like when you walk in a museum, you see dinosaur bones and little things on display, you know, that's for learning. That's what we puttin' out. We puttin' it in your face like, boom! This is our album, you take it home and you study it and learn about the stuff we talkin' about. 'Cause a lot of kids growin' up now that want to rap don't know what happened back then, they only gonna put out what they hearin' now.

Tame: Right, they emulatin' styles from other people. It's like, "You was rappin' back in the days?" "No." "When you start rhymin'?" "When Snoop Dog's album came out." You know what I'm saying? Niggas wanna sound like Snoop 'cause that's all they know.

El: That's the thing we try to make people see, that we different from every other group. Be yourself. When people can look in a magazine or hear your stuff, they be like, "Damn, they just like me, they ordinary brothers that just rhyme, they walk up and down the block just like I do."

Tame: Plus we're underground. Where else do you find Artifacts? Underground.

So you guys have been hooked up since '89?

Tame: We was down with the same crew. It was like the Jersey Juice Crew. It was like a whole bunch of MCs and a whole bunch of DJs. I heard his tapes and he heard mine, and we was like, "Yo, that's def."

El The Sensai: Right 'cause we knew the same people but we didn't know each other. I finally got down with the crew and they was like, "That's Tame, you didn't know he rocked?" And I was like, "Nah." So one day I just happened to go over there and he was there and everybody was freestylin' and after that day it was like. . . bam!

As a crew, what kind of places did you rock, like any clubs that were hittin' at the time?

El: Club 88.

Tame: Club 88, yeah we caught wreck there.

El: Hell yeah. Everybody remember us from there. That's home base right there.

Tame: Everybody was there—Naughty, Redman, Lords. Back in the day that was the only spot where they would let motherfuckers get on and rock.

What's the neighborhood like over there?

El: Some parts is wild, some parts is like....

Y'all from the wild side?

El: It's lock-up capital where we at. It be on the news, "Hard Copy," all that.

So you guys ever bomb there?

Tame: Damn near go out every fuckin' weekend. Me, LTD, the Boom Skwad, NRG, those are the cliques I'm down with. They had a gallery showing out here in like '85—that's when kids knew that Jersey had niggas who could write.

Who are some of the people you look up to in the world of graf?

Tame: J Starr, Jero, Afrika 131, Kraftwerk—Gnome and Gemini. And my man Porn, no question. He was my left hand. Luze, West, all FC. I wanna give props to KRS-One too, that fucked me up back in the day. When he first came out, with that 'One' in his name, that was some graffiti shit. Rakim writin' rhymes in graffiti, all that shit. Graf was always a part of hip-hop, it was just lost in the mix from when it started to now. So we just put some light back on it. Graffiti like roaches, it ain't never go away.

Have you guys always rhymed about that?

Tame: We not claimin' to be the hip-hop historians, but we understand and tryin' to show respect for what made us what we is, you know what I'm sayin'?

Name some of your favorite records.

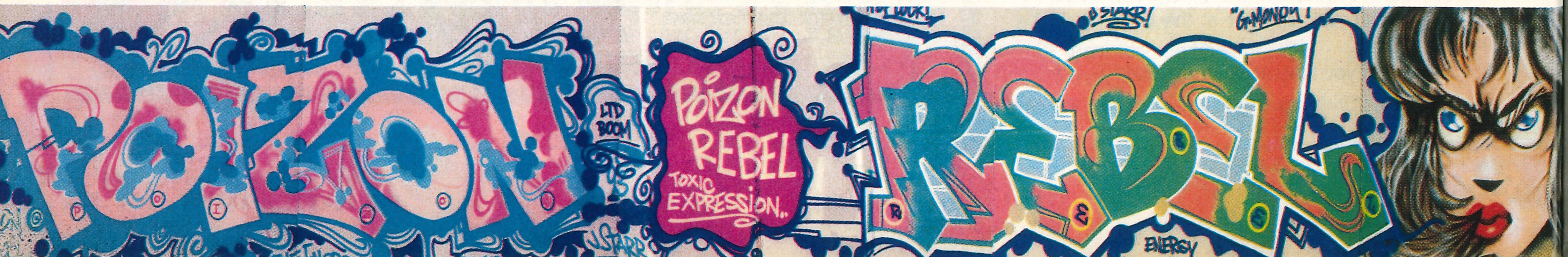
El: Word is born, "Nobody Beats the Biz." Because when I heard that on the radio, I didn't understand it.

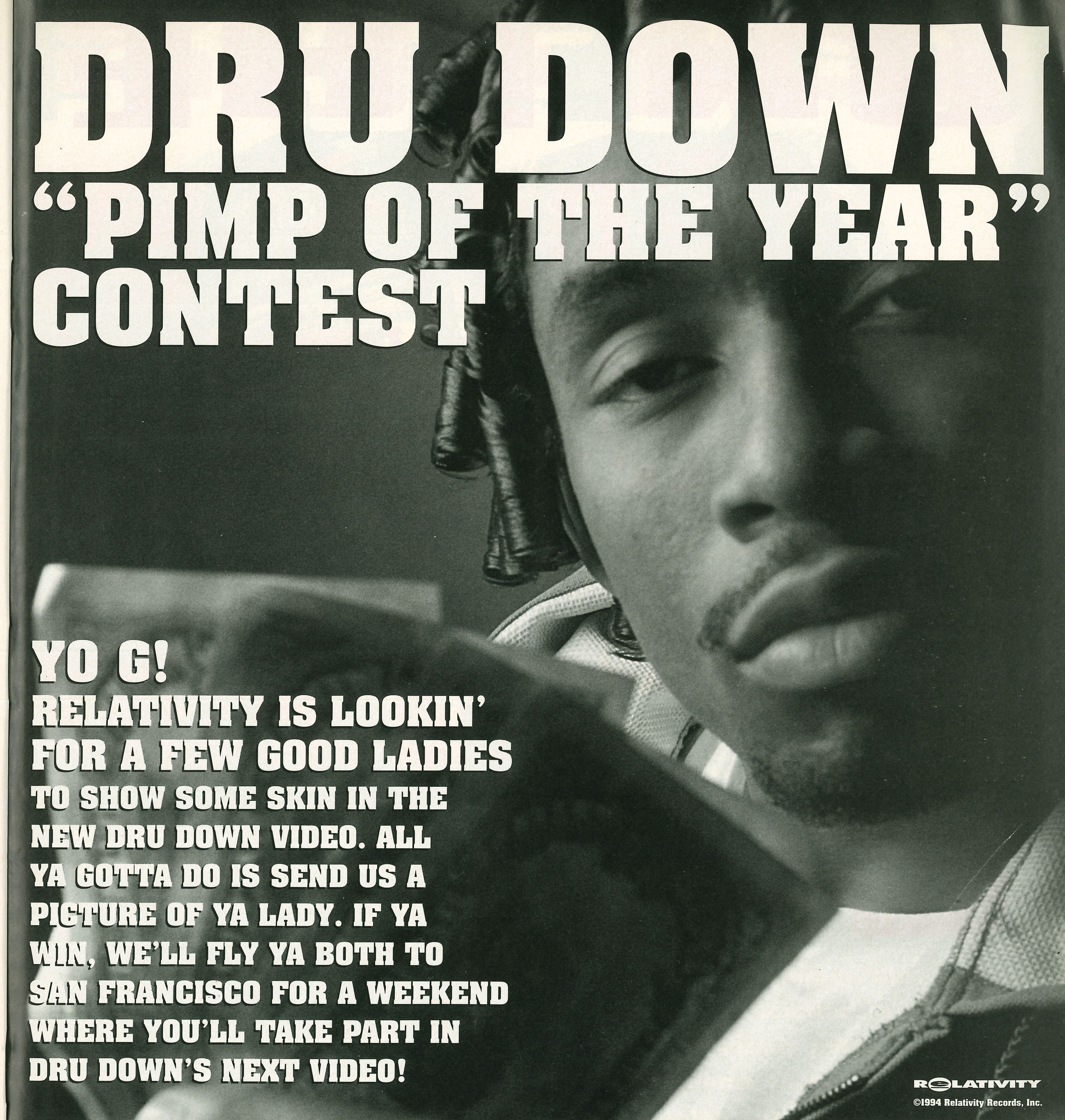
Tame: We was like, "What is this?" We didn't know shit about samplin'.

El: Word, all of that. 3XDope, "The Greatest Man Alive." Word. Biz Markie, I was like, "Damn, that ain't no program." You know, that was the first sample, besides "Ego Trippin'" that I was like, "Damn." "Ego Trippin'" Ultramagnetic MCs, all they shit, "Cracked Out."

Tame: And you sat there thinkin', "How the fuck did he make that beat sound like that?" That's when everybody started really samplin' shit.

El: That's the thing that kills brothers, when they ask that question, "Who'd you grow up listening to?" Grand Master Flash, I mean, all due respect, I didn't grow up listening to them because I couldn't get over there to get into it. I knew about it 'cause I heard it on tapes and the radio. But I grew up on the Juice Crew era, Marley and Kane and Biz and all them albums. PE when they first came out, KRS. That's when I was like clubbin', all that shit. I gotta give respect to my era because if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be doin' this. Ⓢ

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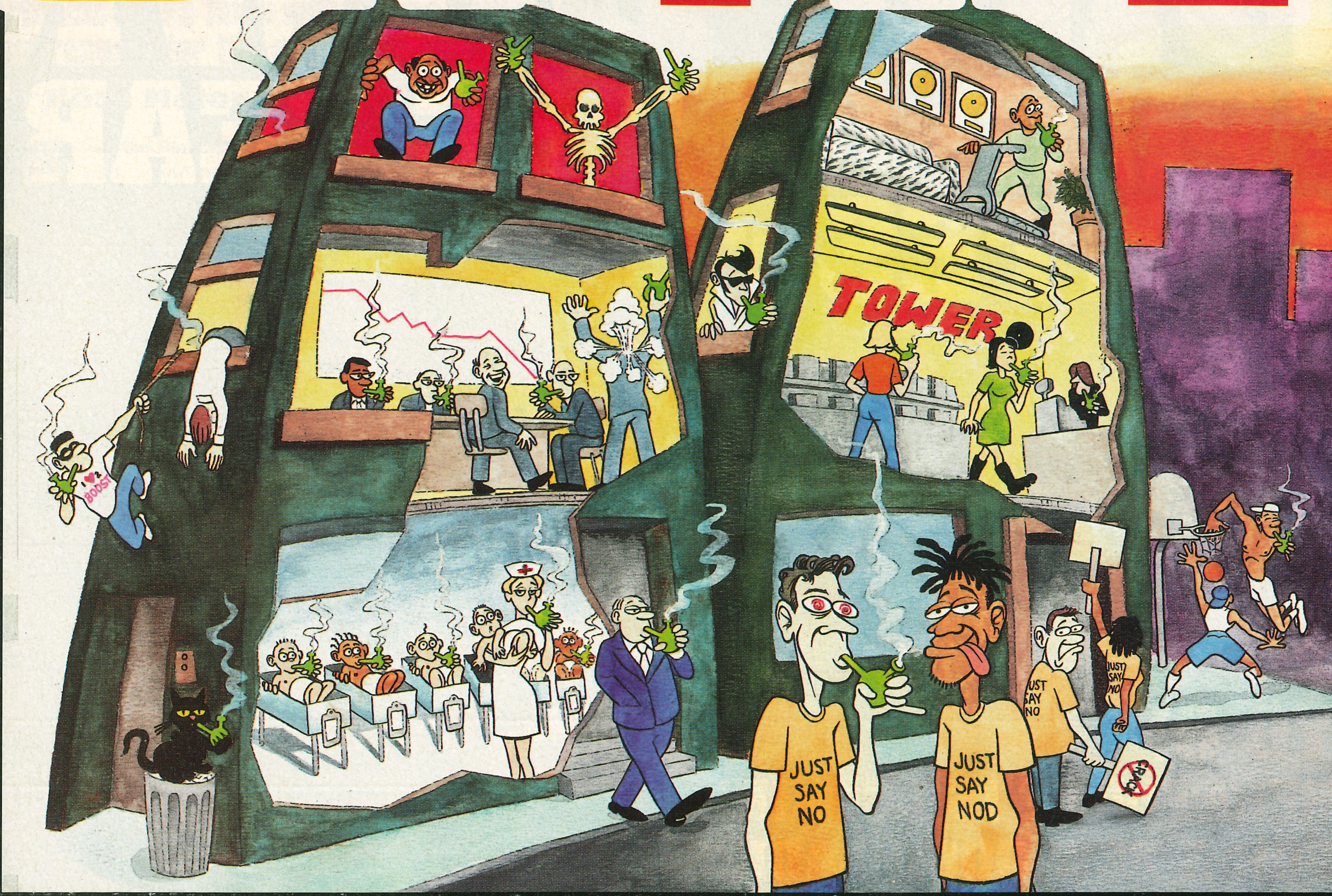


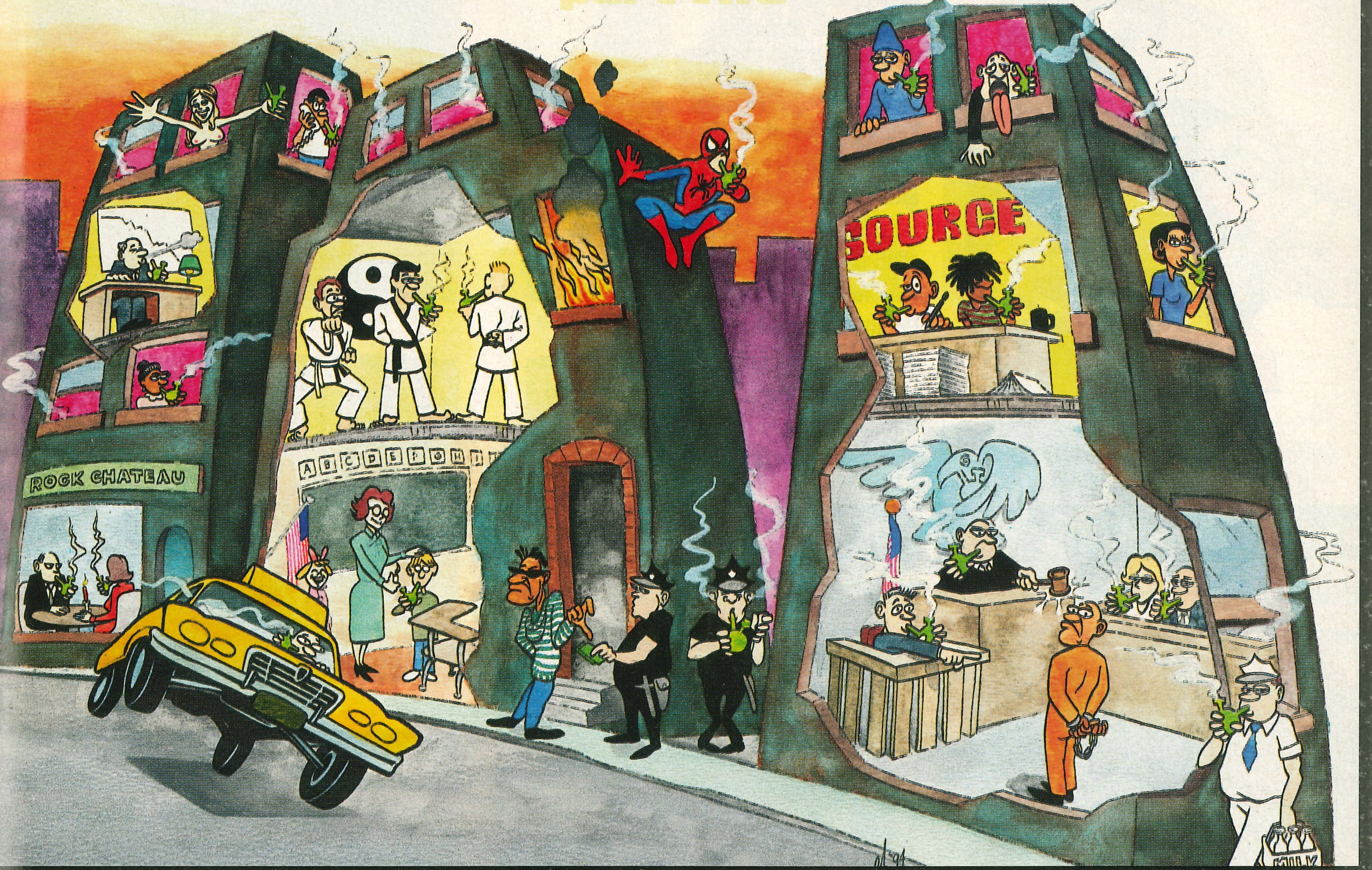
COCAINE IS NOT A DOMESTIC PRODUCT. It simply will not grow in the North American climate. It does not magically fall from the sky like a gift from an ancient Greek god. The cravings of this country's coke addicts cannot be satisfied with humble quantities the way Jesus Christ fed a multitude with a couple of fish and five loaves of bread. The process of getting cocaine into the country rivals the type of operation it takes to win wars or build multi-billion dollar companies. And Mickey D's with their "billions and billions served" ain't got nothing on the world's cocaine lords, who move countless kilos of their own junk food around the globe every year. In the second installment of "On The Rocks," we examine the pieces of the machinery that bring cocaine from South America to a street corner near you.

JAMES BERNARD AND REGINALD C. DENNIS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GRANGER A. DAVIS

ROCKS

part two

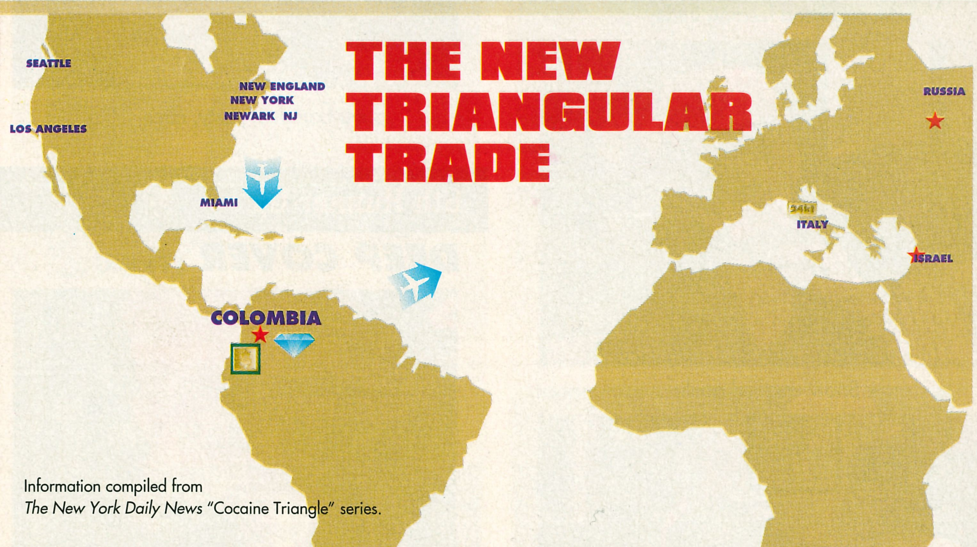


You probably know that Colombian drug cartels supply the world with the majority of its cocaine, but what you might not know is that they have a couple of partners. The mandatory 20-year federal prison sentence for convicted money launderers has forced the Colombians to employ several American Jewish clergy and Israel-based gold and diamond district businessmen to convert the illegal money into legitimate money for them. Because their everyday practices don't get scrutinized, their institutions are ideal laundering instruments. Bank and federal officials don't question large cash deposits by religious institutions (they figure it's donation money), nor gold and diamond dealers (since they deal primarily in cash). Most dealers who launder write off the drug money as company income, buy planes to supposedly transport the jewelry internationally (they are actually transporting more coke), or buy gold at inflated prices and sell it at a loss to other "participating" businesses. Some simply trade the bills for checks with other jewelers who need the cash. Money launderers typically get to keep 20 to 30 percent of the money they handle. The Russian émigrés, in America by way of Israel and political refuge, play many different roles. Some are employed as muscle to protect the cartel's safe houses, some set up front companies internationally and, more recently, others help set up shop in the post-Soviet Union countries.

SHAWNEE SMITH

MAC GRAPH: MAP BY CARLOS E. VEGA

THE NEW TRIANGULAR TRADE



Information compiled from
The New York Daily News "Cocaine Triangle" series.

LEGEND Routes of Money Laundering:

★ •Countries involved

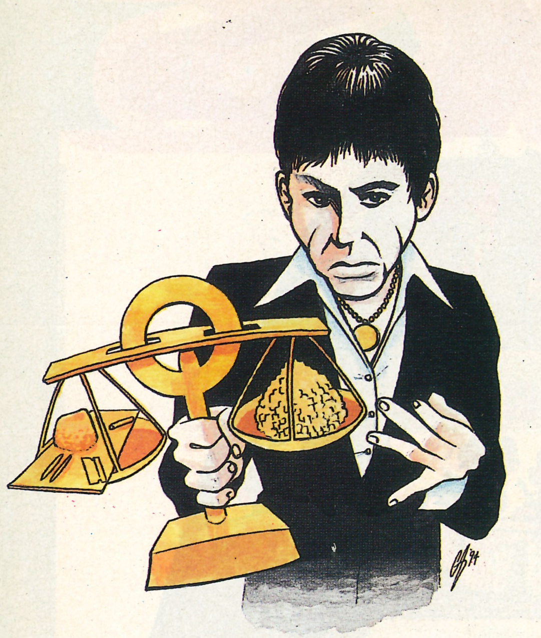
▣ •Money is shipped directly to Colombia to start businesses and other financial instruments

✈ •Gold is sent to Colombia via airline personnel

24kt •Gold is sent to Italy and made into jewelry

◆ •Jewelry is sent back to Colombia to be exported to the U.S. at a cheaper rate

✈ •Jewelers use drug money to buy planes



THE GOLDEN SCALE AWARD

You've heard of the Golden Globe Awards, you've heard of the Oscars, and you've heard of the Emmys. In recognition of the crack epidemic's 10th summer, we got a little something new for you. Here, we present "The Golden Scale Award" to the fattest appearance by cocaine (either rock or powdered) in the history of American film. Savor these pages 'cause you won't see nothing like this ever again.

8th Runner-Up:

ROBOCOP (1987)

A cokehead feeding frenzy

Snow-covered peaks

Now that's one way to get some attention

7th Runner-Up:

CARLITO'S WAY (1993)

Suburban pool party, circa 1976

6th Runner-Up:

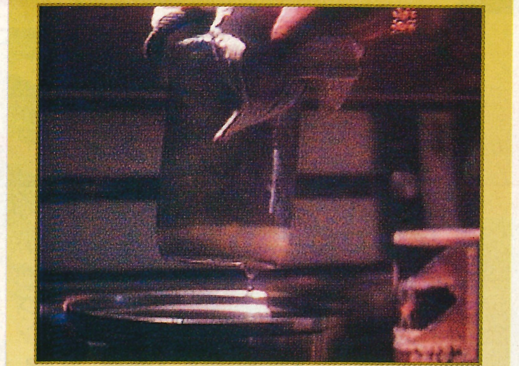
DEEP COVER (1992)

JEFF GOLDBLUM

Do you think actor Jeff Goldblum is happy about having his name superimposed over this scene during the opening credits?

5th Runner-Up:

MENACE II SOCIETY (1993)



Tyrin Turner as Caine: Cooking it up

Cutting it up

4th Runner-Up:

JUNGLE FEVER (1991)

Welcome to the Taj Mahal, the 8th wonder of the world

Samuel Jackson and Halle Berry: "Tell mama I smoked the TV"

3rd Runner-Up:

LESS THAN ZERO (1988)

Robert Downey, Jr., was the first white boy to smoke crack on the big screen: First you hit the pipe. .

. . . and then recline

2nd Runner-Up:

SUPERFLY (1972)

Ron O'Neal as Superfly demonstrates 1970s cocaine etiquette: Right nostril. . .

. . . left nostril. . .

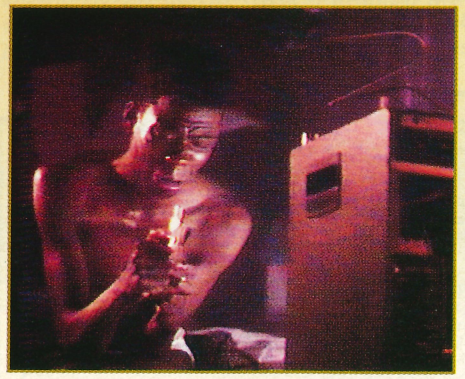
. . . and lick the spoon

"Some things go better with coke," she says

1st Runner-Up:

NEW JACK CITY (1991)

Chris Rock as Pookie: Bagging it up at work



Succumbing to temptation

And the winner is. . .

SCARFACE (1983)

Snorrrrrrt. . .

Evidently, Tony Montana needed to powder his nose to freshen up for his final battle

Honorable Mention:

ANNIE HALL (1977)

Achoo! Woody Allen (as Alvy Singer) displays the smooth social skills that helped him lose his girl

Cracker

Diary of a White Basehead (Part Two)

by Zak Davidson

***Last month,** in the first part of "Cracker," the writer—a college graduate on his way to a successful career in the publishing industry—described how recreational use of cocaine led to an addiction. When swollen nasal passages prevented him from snorting, a friend showed him how to cook freebase—leading him down the path of the pipe. Copping powder and rocks from storefronts in New York's East Village, he started smoking cocaine at work and at home. As his addiction mounted, he began borrowing and stealing from people around him. He became romantically involved with a Times Square stripper who also used drugs, but he ended up stealing from her friends as well. Under the influence of cocaine, he always felt like "the man." But as the vicious cycle of addiction and crime spiraled out of control, that facade was about to come crashing down.*

A lot of people were looking for me because I owed them bank. One such guy and his friends began calling me at home and at work to threaten me. I took this seriously and called my man Mike from Uptown. I needed a piece. Within three hours I had a loaded 9mm in my sweaty hands. Mike showed me the ins and outs of how to use it because I had never fired a semi before.

I told him I planned to pay this guy $300 with the remainder of my check the next day. Mike said he would come with one of his boys to make sure things did not get out of hand. I waited on a remote corner on the Lower East Side while Mike and his boy sat across the street, fully strapped. When the dude arrived with two of his punk friends, I realized it would not go smoothly. They got out of a cab and stepped right up to me, calling me a crackhead, and one threw a punch which only grazed me.

I heard Mike and his boy screaming as they ran across the street towards us, and I began punching wildly. Mike clocked one guy, then put his gun to his face. The punk's bravado turned to bawling as he pleaded not to be shot. The guy who took a swing at me was on all fours in a stupor, after having his head slammed against the concrete. I pulled his face up towards me and let fly the hardest downward right I could. I heard his jaw snap. I started kicking and stomping him mercilessly until Mike pulled me off—we needed to get out of there. I was juiced on the power vibe the loaded piece gave me.

The next day, I was approached by a detective outside my apartment building, who gave me no choice but to go with him to appear in a lineup. I was ID'd by two of the guys we fought with the day before. The other was in the hospital with a broken jaw.

The charge was assault with a deadly weapon and battery, and I spent two nights in jail because I couldn't get anyone to bail me out. I had cried wolf too many times.

The detectives said they could let me slide into a misdemeanor assault charge if I gave them the identities of the two "Black guys" with guns. There was no way I'd rat because Mike was my man and he saved me from a severe beating. Plus, if I rat, I die—cut and dry.

Finally, an old friend who I called from jail bailed me out. The charges were dropped the next week because I gave my public defender dated recordings from my company's phonemail with threats from my accusers. "The man" beat the system at a very high level. The cops couldn't stop me and I felt a heightened sense of power over my life.

Flame to glass. . . to screen. . . draw. . . hold . . . rush.

That weekend, while running out to score, I finally utilized the gun I was now always carrying. Late Saturday night, I saw an unsuspecting, drunk, middle-aged man in a business suit exiting from a bank machine. He walked down a dim side street and I held him up at gunpoint. He gave me a bit of lip so I pistol-whipped him and took his wallet and watch. I ran for a few blocks and stopped to rest and see what was in the wallet. There was only $50 in cash, but I sold the credit cards to a dealer for two $20 bags and the nice watch for $30. As I hastily walked home to cook up my new profit, a vision of the guy I just robbed lying on the ground begging me not to shoot him popped into my head. I threw up right in the street. Another cherry busted in my crack cycle, because the next jacking was easier and I was bolder.

I stuck up a number of other baseheads after they left bodegas, usually throwing them a beating as well. I also mugged some hookers, following and waiting for them as they finished off Johns. I saw a punk dealer who had sold me some bullshit a month or so earlier. I asked him if I could get some "iello," and as he reached under a car tire for his stash bag, I put the steel to his dome and told him to give me the bag and start running. He obliged and I made off with $100 in cane baggies and about $50 in crack vials. Big score for "the man."

That was easy so I tried to hold up another dealer a few days later. Everything went the same way but as I jogged away I heard a banging sound behind me. I glanced back to see the dealer reaching into a trash can and pulling out his own piece. I ripped off a couple of rounds blindly behind me as I sprinted in a spastic zig-zag up the street. I dropped his stash bag, which is probably why he stopped his pursuit long enough for me to escape.

Bugging and out of breath at home, my body shook uncontrollably. Too close for comfort. I quickly forgot about the incident because I had no shit and I needed to get high. I stole my roommate's Walkman and a couple of CDs, got my fix and dove into my temporary nirvana.

A couple of weeks later, I finally lost my job, which was a long time coming. It was early November and I was now completely broke with no paycheck. I continued stealing, scamming and trying desperately to remain "the man" that I still believed I was. I sold the gun a few days later for $50 and I started hanging around on various drug corners, fronting like I was a dealer and ripping off any sucker dumb enough to give me money. My life was spinning more and more out of control and "the man" was starting to doubt himself.

I went to a party that a girl up the street was having with the intention of getting some ends somehow. I ran into my boy Nat, who I had known since grade school. We had partied much together and Nat was streetwise. Immediately he knew I was hooked on something and for the first time I admitted to someone else that I was a full-fledged basehead.

ILLUSTRATION:TODD JAMES

Pieces of the Rock:

Nuggets of Cocaine History

1971:
First reports of "coca paste," crack cocaine's grandfather, in Peru.

1974:
Peru's largest city, Lima, is overrun with a paste-smoking epidemic.

1974:
First reports of freebasing in California.

June 9, 1980:
Richard Pryor sets himself on fire while freebasing at his San Fernando Valley home, suffering third-degree burns over his entire upper torso and parts of his face.

1980:
Paste-smoking spreads to Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela.

Mid-1981:
Early reports of drug addicts purchasing what would later be called crack in Miami shooting galleries.

1982:
Cocaine customers in New York City's selling or copping zones vote with their money: 80% of them want their cocaine cooked like freebase instead of in the powder form.

Late 1983:
The term "crack" is used for the first time at a staff meeting of the New York State Division of Substance Abuse Services.

December 1983:
Thomas (Tootie) Reese, South Central LA's pre-eminent drug kingpin for two decades, gets arrested, blowing the coke market wide open.

February 1, 1984:
Larry Flynt, the publisher of *Hustler* Magazine, refuses to reveal sources of videotapes that implicate auto exec John De Lorean with cocaine trafficking and gets sentenced to 15 months for contempt of court.

March 10, 1984:
In Colombia, the police seize $1.2 billion worth of cocaine.

April 26, 1984:
David Anthony Kennedy, 28, the third son of the late Senator Robert Kennedy, dies of a cocaine overdose in Palm Beach. Two people are arrested in connection with selling him drugs.

August 1, 1984:
Richard Pryor sues *The Enquirer* for $10 million for libel for reporting that hecontinued to use cocaine while in the hospital recovering from burns; Pryor wins an undisclosed amount in a settlement.

August 16, 1984:
John Z. De Lorean, a struggling auto exec, acquitted by a federal jury of eight counts connected to a scheme to distribute 55 lbs. of cocaine.

August 23, 1984:
US Customs agents find over 2,000 lbs. of cocaine base hidden in a shipment of 180 industrial sized pulleys; the second largest seizure in US history to date—the street value is $700 million.

August 28, 1984:
Washington, DC Mayor Marion Barry holds a press conference to complain about a criminal investigation against him. A female friend of his had pled guilty to cocaine selling charges and he was allegedly buying some from her. Barry denies ever using cocaine.

JOHNNY CRAWFORD

Who Woulda Thought?

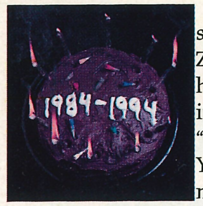
FORMER REPRESENTATIVE PATRICK SWINDALL LOVED THE SMELL OF COCAINE MONEY.

1. REPRESENTATIVE ROBERT HANRAHAN,
a Republican from Illinois, pleaded guilty of money-laundering charges back in 1988. Money-laundering is the process by which dirty drug money is cleaned up to appear legal.

2. REPRESENTATIVE PATRICK SWINDALL,
a right-wing Republican from suburban Atlanta, was convicted on nine perjury counts for his testimony in a money-laundering scheme. He lied under oath by denying that he told an undercover agent that he was willing to participate in a money-laundering scheme.

3. RICHARD SIBERMAN,
a leading fundraiser for presidential candidate Jerry Brown in 1980, promised to launder millions in drug profits for an undercover FBI agent. "I've been doing this for twenty years," he reportedly boasted.

4. JOHN HULL,
a close associate of Oliver North, played a leading role in a scheme to import $10 million worth of cocaine into Florida. He spent two months in a Costa Rican prison.



Nat punched me sharply in the ribs. "Damn, Zak," he said in shock and he lifted my shirt, revealing my now scrawny body. "You used to be a big boy. You ain't bullshittin'. You must be on the pipe!" We went into the bathroom and he lectured me for five minutes. Then he pulled out a bag of coke and offered me a line. What? That was fucked up. How's he gonna lecture me then turn me on. But I couldn't turn it down, so I freezed the coke on my teeth and lips (I still couldn't snort it), stole some CDs and stepped back into the night to do my thing.

I returned to my crib one afternoon from a two-day binge in a fleabag crack hotel on 23rd Street. I had been with a cheap ho who kept me high on her profits, so in my Iceberg Slim fantasy, I was still "the man." That soon came crashing down.

I saw a Town Car limo parked near the entrance of my apartment building. Leaning on it was a huge guy wearing chauffeur black. I figured he was waiting on someone at one of the restaurants nearby. He was looking at me as I walked down the street, and as I got close he glanced down at something in his hand, which he then tucked into his breast pocket. He walked up to me and, oblivious to the situation, I smiled and began to say a casual "what up." He dropped me to the ground with a powerful blow to the face that shattered my nose and split both my chapped lips. As I regained consciousness, I rolled over to one side and received a few more painful blows to the back of the head and kidneys.

As I heard the limo speed off, I gradually pulled myself off of the cold pavement. On the ground next to me I saw a photograph. It was of me at a party with a beer in my hand and a smile on my healthy face. I'm not sure if it had slipped out of his pocket or if it had been left as a calling card, but it scared the shit out of me. Someone had definitely set me up to get beat down, and most likely I deserved it.

I went upstairs and hit the pipe ferociously for a few hours. My nose, lips and ribs were extremely sore and I could feel the crusty blood all over the bottom half of my face. I decided to take a shower, something I rarely did.

As I peeled off my clothes and stood naked in front of the mirror, I was horrified. What used to be a solid athletic build of 190 pounds was now a scrawny frame of bones, skin and bruises. There were dark circles around my eyes, which highlighted my dilated pupils and thickly bloodshot whites. I ran my fingers through my greasy hair, unwashed for at least two weeks, and a few loose pieces fell to the floor. I scratched at the dried blood on my beard and winced as I noticed how filthy my hands were. From my fingernails ran inch-long puss-crusted cracks which appeared half a centimeter deep because of the raised callous ridges that bordered them. These painful skin fissures were the result of flicking lighters incessantly, bending metal screens and holding hot and broken crack pipes.

I looked at the picture left over from the beating I got earlier. I started to cry because I finally acknowledged "the man" was a charlatan. But I still went out that night because my addiction had me by the balls.

> **I went upstairs and hit the pipe ferociously for a few hours. My nose, lips and ribs were extremely sore and I could feel the crusty blood all over the bottom half of my face.**

The next morning, while in a panic from my paranoid delusions of people watching me, I called my father and told him what was going on. He said he would wire me $80 to take the train home. I convinced him to also wire me an extra $120 to pay off a few fake debts. He did. Bad move—but how was he to know? He had never even seen cocaine, much less crack. I smoked up the $200 in the next two days, called him back and confessed.

We decided he should buy me a ticket and have it waiting for me at the station. If I could have scalped it, I would have. I borrowed $100 from an unsuspecting old friend who had just moved to New York, scored, cooked it up and left for Penn Station with a prayer and a crack pipe.

I hit it hard on the train ride home, wandering from bathroom to bathroom and car to car. I arrived around 4 am and hit the pipe until my stash ran out the next morning. I took my last hit in the bathroom at the doctor's office waiting for an appointment my parents had set up for me. Somehow, I got a general clean bill of health. I began drug treatment the next Monday.

I went into outpatient treatment, which consisted of intense group therapy and drug education, every weekday from 5 to 8 pm. There were an average of 15 addicts in the group, and as some dropped out or completed the program, other new addicts arrived. There was a wide spectrum of people in my group from all walks of life—a lawyer, a grandmother, a gravedigger, an airplane mechanic, an FBI agent, and even a former lottery winner now broke from coke. I completed the three month intensive therapy portion of my treatment with no hitches. My insurance would not cover me any further, so I chose not to enter the 18-month aftercare program. Instead, I went to a 12-step program, which was better therapy for me because the meetings were a place to socialize with other former addicts, and the format was "come and go as you please." Most of the people I met were as fucked up as me or worse. I remained in the free program for a few more months until I felt my life was back on track.

I realize now how lucky I was to have a family willing to take me back in and get me some help. I also realize that many others in my situation do not have the escape route that I had. Many of those people wind up dead or in jail. Base and crack hold no color prejudice and know no societal boundaries. While it is more readily available in lower income neighborhoods, the people I encountered on the streets, in the bodegas and crack houses had one thing in common: their addiction.

It took me 18 months to pay back the debts I felt I had to. I still owe some good friends money, but they let it slide for now. At times, I have linked my addiction to a bunch of things—being an only child, depression, general obsessive compulsive behavior and a government conspiracy to control the masses. Those are irrelevant excuses now; the only things important to me about cocaine are that I don't do that shit anymore and that I understand I am simply "a man." Ⓢ

September 1, 1984:
The price of a kilo of coke increases to $25,000-$30,000 from $15,000 six months before.

September 24, 1984:
William Morris Hetric, who was arrested in the investigation that netted John Z. De Lorean (see Aug. 16, 1984), pleads guilty to charges of cocaine trafficking and lands a 10-year bid.

October 20, 1984:
For the first time, the *LA TImes* links the rise in driveby killings to the emerging crack trade.

October 26, 1984:
Nine defendents in an alleged Atlanta-based cocaine ring are convicted of smuggling five tons of cocaine. Estimated worth: $3.8 billion. It is the largest bust by federal agents to date. The leader of the ring had escaped from a Tennessee prison where he was serving a 30+ year bid on a drug charge. His defense is that he had "permission" from the Colombian government to smuggle drugs because he "was spying on Marxists groups in that country for the CIA." He was sentenced on Nov. 26, to life in prison without parole.

November 1, 1984:
The US Coast Guard, Navy and the Drug Enforcement Agency begin an investigation into the marijuana trade, called "Operation Hat Trick"; inadvertantly they discover that 75 percent of the cocaine used in the US comes from Colombia.

Nov. 7, 1984:
Struggling auto exec John De Lorean runs a $5,000 ad in the Los Angeles Herald Examiner soliciting money to cover his $1 million legal fees that piled up during his trial for cocaine trafficking.

Nov. 26, 1984:
The President's commission on onrganized crime looks into cocaine trafficking. The commissioners say they've never seen as much cocaine on the street as there is now.

Nov. 26, 1984:
Two Americans and two Mexicans arrested with 1,500 lbs. of cocaine (street value: $1 billion) in two pickup trucks in Yucca, Arizona.

December 7, 1984:
Stacy Keach (star of "Mickey Spilane's Mike Hammer") is sentenced in London to 9 months in jail for smuggling 1.3 ounce of cocaine into Britain.

August 4, 1985:
Two Jamaican crews have a shootout at a picnic in Oakland, New Jersey. Well over 1,000 rounds are fired. Three people are killed and 13 wounded.

Nov. 17, 1985:
First mention of crack in the major media, in this case, the *New York Times*.

July 1986:
In "Operation Blast Furnace," Reagan sends troops and helicopters to Bolivia but fails to

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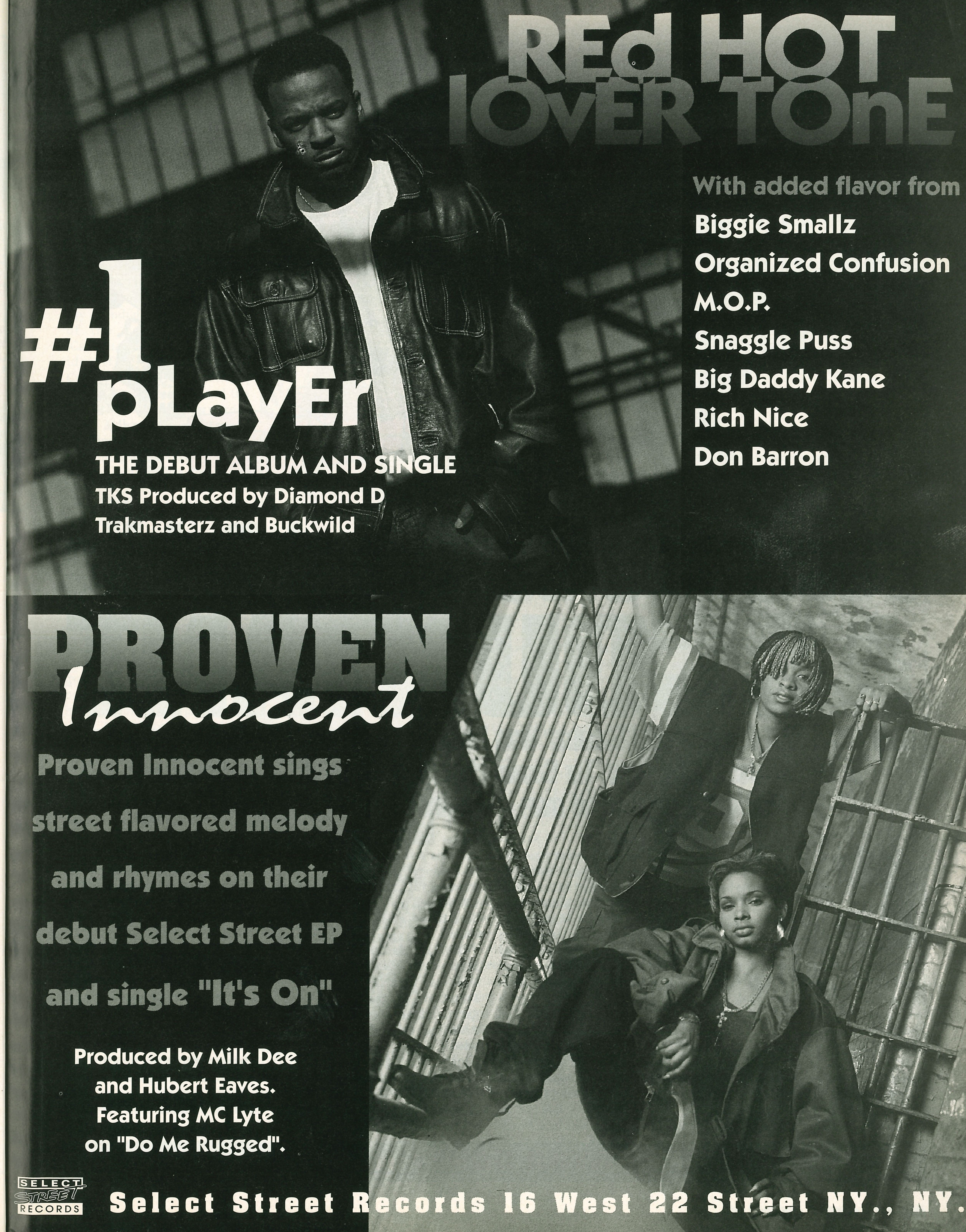
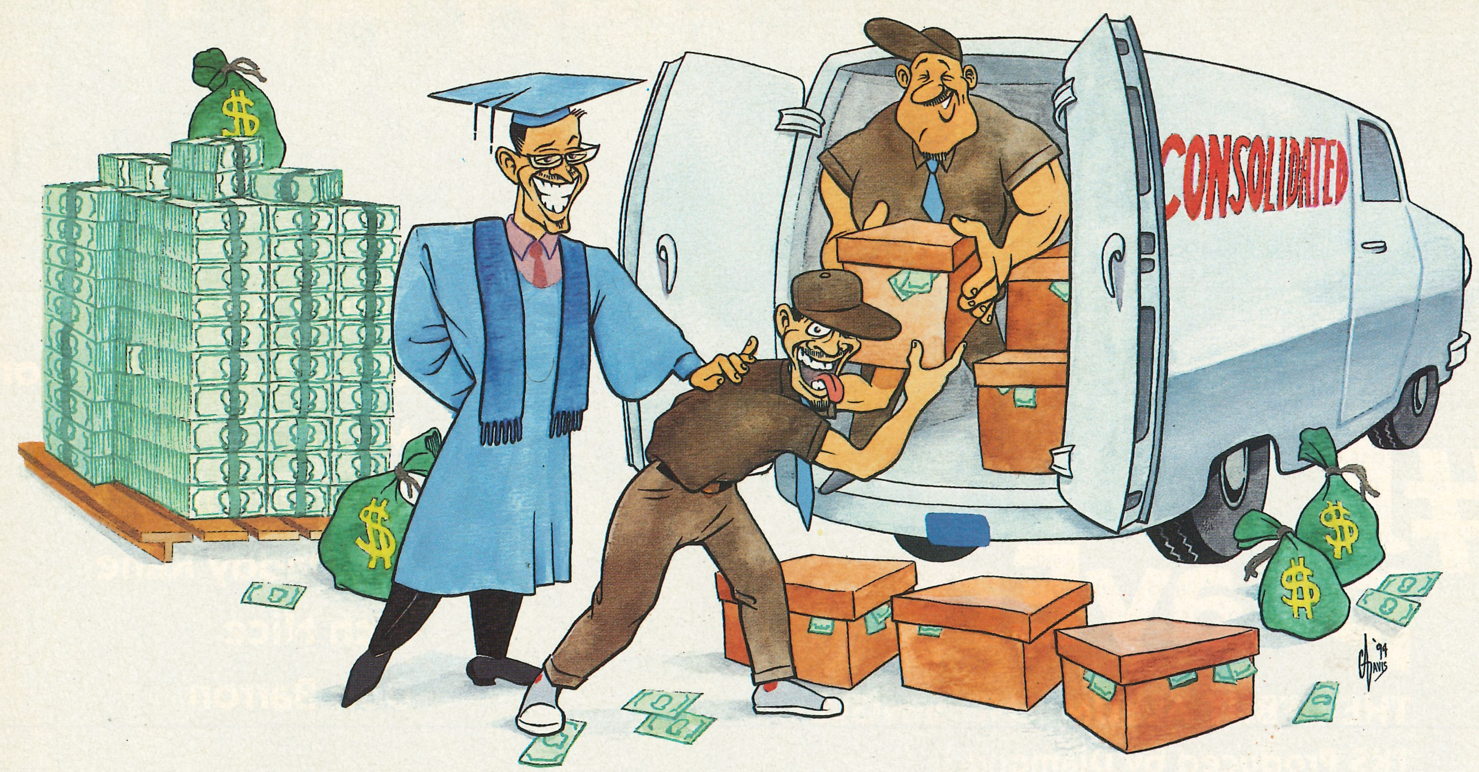

REd HOT lOvER TOnE
#1 pLayEr
THE DEBUT ALBUM AND SINGLE
TKS Produced by Diamond D
Trakmasterz and Buckwild
With added flavor from
Biggie Smallz
Organized Confusion
M.O.P.
Snaggle Puss
Big Daddy Kane
Rich Nice
Don Barron
PROVEN Innocent
Proven Innocent sings street flavored melody and rhymes on their debut Select Street EP and single "It's On"
Produced by Milk Dee and Hubert Eaves. Featuring MC Lyte on "Do Me Rugged".
SELECT STREET RECORDS
Select Street Records 16 West 22 Street NY., NY.



Cocaine's Certified Public ACCOUNTANT

Until his 1993 death, Pablo Escobar was Colombia's biggest cocaine kingpin ever. In an exclusive interview, The Source chats with Ramon Milian-Rodriguez, Escobar's right hand man. (The first of two installments)

Cuban-American Ramon Milian-Rodriguez was the chief money launderer for Pablo Escobar, Colombia's biggest cocaine kingpin. Born in Cuba in 1951, Milian-Rodriguez and his family were among the hundreds of thousands of Cubans who fled Cuba for Miami after Fidel Castro took power in 1959. By the time of his arrest in 1983, Milian-Rodriguez, a college-educated accountant, was taking billions of dollars of drug money a year and putting it through hundreds of banks and companies to make it seem legal. Once in jail, Milian-Rodriguez began cooperating with congressional and judicial investigations into the Iran-Contra Scandal, CIA involvement in drug trafficking and General Manuel Noriega of Panama. Because of death threats against him, he was put under the Justice Department's Witness Protection Program. He became, in essence, a non-person, no longer registered as a prison inmate, held at an undisclosed location and not permitted to have visits, even from his family. He is eligible for parole in 1995.

Martha Honey interviewed Milian-Rodriguez in person in a North Carolina prison in 1989, before he was put into Witness Protection. He told Honey how it felt to drive around Miami with $1 million in the trunk of his car, how he never met anyone new after 1978 because he was so well insulated with bodyguards and how he spread around millions of dollars to buy the cooperation of top Central American politicians.

In May, Martha Honey succeeded in getting permission to talk to Milian-Rodriguez again—by phone—for The Source. The only condition was that she couldn't ask him anything about the Witness Protection Program itself. Other than that, everything else was fair game, and Honey was not shy. In this wide-ranging discussion, Milian-Rodriguez detailed how his drug trafficking activities were intertwined with the CIA, the Watergate burglars, General Manuel Noriega in Panama and rightwing anti-Castro Cubans plotting the overthrow of Fidel Castro. Speaking with only the slightest twinge of a Spanish accent, Milian-Rodriguez is frank, intelligent, humorous and reflective in describing his rise and fall as the top money launderer in the United States.

INTERVIEW BY MARTHA HONEY • Illustration by Granger A. Davis

The Source: Begin by explaining your background and your family history.

Ramon Milian-Rodriguez: We left Cuba on January 17, 1959, exactly 17 days after [Fidel] Castro took over. I have crystal clear recollections of Havana. We lived in the old part of Havana with a very extended family, grandparents, parents, uncles. Over there, nobody moves out. Everyone gets married and comes to live together. Our family had the whole floor in a condominium. My grandfather was President of the Banco del Caribe (Caribbean Bank) and had been identified with [deposed Cuban dictator Fulgencio] Batista. Castro nationalized the bank a few months afterwards.

Was Miami an economic letdown?

Let me put it like this. In Havana, I had my own car and chauffeur to drive me to school. But we left with practically nothing. No one came to Miami to stay because nobody thought Castro would last. We moved to Miami's Little Havana, the oldest, ugliest part of town where you could rent a house for 30 bucks a month. We lived in a small two-bedroom home, probably 10 to 12 families plus another 10 guests. At night, we'd break out canvas army cots and the house would be carpeted with them. And [there was only] one bathroom, so you had to make an appointment.

My father was parking cars on the beach and my uncle was washing dishes at Howard Johnson. To tell you the truth, they were delinquents. They had gotten kicked out of school and they were not the most serious people. In Cuba back then, nepotism was really the basis for success. So my family was not really a shining example.

I learned English on the streets. Back then there was no alternate language programs in school and there was a lot of discrimination in the South. People didn't know whether to class us among whites or among Blacks. We were in a real no man's land.

After we decided we weren't going back to Cuba, our family had an exodus to San Jose, California, where my grandmother had moved and she had a large house there. All our friends followed us out there and a little Cuban community started. For the next ten years, we always had house guests. We'd help them get jobs and cars and eventually everyone got settled.

I was so lucky that I came to this country at a time when the Civil Rights Movement was on and when children of minorities really began to have an opportunity. I was a very good student and I ended up going to school on scholarship, to the University of Santa Clara, a classy Jesuit university. I got a degree in accounting and then my CPA [Certified Public Accountant] and MBA [Masters in Business Administration]. So I ended up with all kinds of nice licenses which I no longer have. They have all been taken away. So when I get out, I will be able to pick up garbage—unless they require a license for that.

So how did you end up as a money launderer for the Colombian cartel?

When I got out of school in 1973, I moved back to Miami. There was only one Cuban CPA in the Miami phone book. So I was number two. One of my family's dear friends was Manuel Artime and he encouraged me to go back and said I would do wonderful things. Artime was, to me, a father figure, a hero, someone who had done for me what my father could never do. He was a psychiatrist, a brilliant handler of other men and I, of course, was brainwashed.

Artime was the one who arranged for all my schooling in money laundering. The Jesuits don't teach you this. Artime arranged for me to have private tutoring with people who had expertise in several specialties—security, banking, safe houses, front companies. I learned how to compartmentalize information so you know precisely which piece of the puzzle each employee knows so if there is a leak or a theft, you know how to pinpoint it.

Artime had been one of the leaders of the CIA's unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion of Castro's Cuba in 1961 and he continued to work for the CIA and organize attacks against Cuba after that. Did you know of Artime's connections to the CIA?

Yes, I knew that from the beginning. When I started with Artime, he still had CIA backing.

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: RAMON MILIAN-RODRIGUEZ LIVING LARGE; MANUEL ARTIME AS A YOUNG ANTI-CASTRO ACTIVIST IN 1964; FORMER PANAMANIAN DICTATOR GENERAL MANUEL NORIEGA, UNDER ARREST BY THE US GOVERNMENT; GUILLERMO FORD, THE US-INSTALLED PANAMANIAN PRESIDENT WHO WAS ALSO BOUGHT AND PAID FOR BY THE COCAINE CARTEL

TOP PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MILIAN-RODRIGUEZ FAMILY; OTHER PHOTOS: AP/WIDEWORLD

catch any drug producers.

Late July 1986:
New York's United Black Church Appeal launches a valiant campaign against crack. Some 200 ministers, celebrities and anti-drug activists participate in street corner rallies and 24-hour vigils in areas where crack is sold. "The house is on fire," actor Ossie Davis says at a rally in Harlem. "Those of us who care have to ring the alarm bell."

August 1986:
An argument begins when Beverli Black accuses her boyfriend Daren Jenkins, 23, of spending their last $15 on crack. She storms out of their one-room apartment in Freeport, Long Island, late one night to try to borrow some food stamps. While she was out, Jenkins, an unemployed cabinetmaker, stalks over to the bed where Black's son Batkik is sleeping. High on crack, Jenkins allegedly beats the little boy to death, two weeks before his third birthday. Such stories start becoming all-too-familiar.

Fall 1986:
The Drug Enforcement Agency makes an emergency request for $44 million to fund 200 agents to organize a national anti-crack effort. President Reagan denies the request. In 1975, the DEA had 2,500 agents. When Reagan left office, the DEA still had 2,500 agents.

September 1986:
President Reagan calls a meeting of all US ambassadors to the major drug-producing countries to pressure their governments to act against local drug producers.

December 1986:
LA gang migration is in full swing. By 1991, the Justice Department knows of Crips and Bloods in 32 states and 113 cities. LA-based gangs control up to 30% of the crack trade.

Mid-1988:
Over 100 LA gang members have relocated to Portland, Oregon, to deal crack, recruiting almost 300 Portland-based youth to adopt their gang-oriented lifestyle.

1989:
Dr. Cyperian Anyanwu opens America Beats Addiction, Inc., the Philadelphia-area's first Black-owned and -operated live-in drug abuse rehab center. It eventually has a 55% success rate (most centers are lucky to hit 20%).

June 21, 1989:
The Key West Police Department is embarassed by comments by two of its detectives who say the police are too "understaffed" to fight the drug war.

January 10, 1990:
During his winter break, Christopher Clemente, a student at the ivy league Wharton School of Business in Pennsylvania, is arrested in his Harlem apartment with over 2,000 vials of crack, a Mac 11, a 9mm Glock, a bullet-proof vest and $12,000 in cash.

June 1990:
DC Mayor Marion Barry's trial begins. He was arrested for allegedly smoking crack in the Vista Hotel in DC, where the cops set an elaborate trap for him.

August 1990:
Todd Bridges is acquitted of the near-fatal shooting of a convicted drug dealer in a LA crackhouse.

July 16, 1991:
Rick James tortures Frances Alley, tying her to a chair and burning her with a crack pipe for 40 minutes.

December 17, 1991:
Two babies are abandoned at two different Philadelphia police stations. As the crack epidemic spreads, more and more babies are being abandoned.

March 1992:
In West Homestead, Pennsylvania, "Operation Clean Sweep" is brought to a close. After the nine-month effort, the cops bust 180 alleged street-level dealers.

May 1992:
A survey finds that 96% of grade school kids in New York believe that crack is dangerous and would never use it.

July 24, 1992:
The East Columbus (Ohio) Neighborhood Network spearheads an anti-crack march.

July 30, 1992:
Despite protests from property owners, Cleveland Mayor Michael White refuses to apologize for his anti-crack program which boarded up 238 drug houses.

August 1, 1992:
The Oakland Police Department confiscates 43 cars and issues 77 citations in an anti-drug sweep.

September 17, 1992:
Eddie Lee White, a 28-year-old Clevelander, hangs himself, choosing death over crack.

My first job as a young accountant working for Artime was that I delivered money to the families of the Watergate burglars. Where do you think that money came from? Nobody was able to find the source of the money. It was drug money. It was the only source [the CIA] had of money that didn't have to have oversight.

Was Manuel Artime involved in drug trafficking?

In the mid-1970s, President [Jimmy] Carter decided to dismantle the CIA effort against Castro. But the attacks against Cuba didn't stop; they just went private. Until his death, Manuel Artime was an active anti-communist force, organizing high speed boats to leave Miami or Key West and raid a sea coast town or carry out sabotage in Cuba. And whenever he needed funding, some of the money came from drugs.

From marijuana?

Yes, marijuana from Colombia. My first clients were disaffected Cubans who were left hanging high and dry [by the CIA] and took their anti-communist fighting assets—planes, boats, etc.—and converted them over to marijuana deals. Then by referral, I ended up with the Colombians.

How did it happen that you were referred to the Colombians?

It's called logistics. A million dollars—even in $100 bills—is very bulky—about three boxes of Xerox paper. So if you're a very successful drug dealer, you have *rooms* full of money. I had warehouses full of money, not rooms. And we sometimes had to rotate money so that the first in was the first out. Because if you leave the first money in, the humidity from all the money on top seeps down to the bills on the bottom and rots them. That's the same problem a grocery store owner has who wants to sell bananas. He has to sell his oldest first.

So logistics was a problem for the Colombians. But this was part of my training from Artime. So I was able, when my first Cuban client told me, "Hey, I dropped off this money for the Colombians and they had a real problem. They almost didn't want to take it because they are stopped up. Do you think you could help them out?" And I said, "Oh sure, bring them over."

So what was your solution?

I adapted existing business systems to money laundering. Federal Express, UPS, all major carriers use distribution and collection points, consolidation points. Any large mover has hubs. So you can consider any major safe house as a hub. And the small houses are little collection points.

Explain how your money collection operations were organized in Miami.

We had a main safe house—it could be a house, warehouse, office, whatever—with about six counters, all Colombians, perhaps four security people and two maintenance staff. It's self-contained and people can't go in or out. Once the counters are in, they're in for six months. It's a tour of duty. And security always demanded that we have our counters's Achilles heel covered, meaning the family. So in Colombia, while you're in that safe house, we have your family in a compound, very well taken care of. Schooling, medical care, everything. This assures you're going to be honest and not going to disclose the location of the safe house to anyone.

Then what we'd do is take all the approaches to the safe house and rent houses, offices, etc. and man them with security personnel. So if

CONTINUED ON PAGE 68

September 30, 1992:
Seattle's Central Area Community Against Drugs starts anti-crack marches three days a week.

October 2, 1992:
Patricia Littlejohn is watching television in her home in East Columbus, Ohio. Narcotics officers burst in, breaking her dining room windows. "They slammed my face into my dining room table repeatedly and covered my face with a sheet," said the 100-pound Littlejohn. "I tried to get up to see what was going on, but one of the officers put his foot on the back of my neck." The cops arrest two men who rented rooms from Littlejohn and charge them with dealing crack, but it is still unclear why they thought it was necessary to leave the middle-aged Littlejohn on the floor bleeding with a broken nose, busted lip and two black eyes.

November 2, 1992:
Rick James tortures Mary Sauges with a crack pipe, beating her unconscious and pouring water on her to revive her so he could beat her again.

December 3, 1992:
During a one-week period, the LAPD seize three crackhouses to the tune of $295,000.

December 22, 1992:
Recovering crack addict Todd Bridges is scheduled to speak at a DC coffeehouse about his "life-changing experience with Jesus Christ."

December 29, 1992:
Todd Bridges is arrested after police stopped his (borrowed) 1988 Mercedes to find 1.5 grams of speed and an illegal loaded handgun.

July 1993:
The House of Representatives proposes a $230 million cut in funds for drug treatment.

August 1993:
A survey reveals that 73% of fourth graders in Washington DC have witnessed an illegal drug sale.

August 26, 1993:
Rev. Jesse Jackson speaks at a conference to fight the racist drug-related sentencing laws, held on the 30th anniversary of Martin Luther King's March on Washington.

September 9,1993:
Rev. L. C. Carter of the First Antioch Missionary Baptist Church leads an anti-crack march through South Central, Los Angeles.

November 1993:
Flavor Flav is arrested for assault.

December 5, 1993:
The *New York TImes Magazine* runs a series of "Cocaine True" photos including a shot of a black female crack addict reaching for a man's zipper with her young child clinging to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 93

Cocaine's King of Kings

Pablo Escobar, the greatest of them all

PABLO ESCOBAR HAD COLOMBIA LOCKED DOWN

Pablo Escobar began his career as a petty thief peddling stolen cars and tombstones and rose, in the 1980s, to become head of Colombia's most powerful cocaine cartel. At its height, his $15 billion-a-year empire included hundreds of companies and controlled 80 percent of the cocaine shipped to the US. Escobar's personal wealth—including a fleet of aircraft, apartments in Florida, hotels in Venezuela and Colombia, and a private zoo—was estimated to be $3.3 billion in 1991, which placed him on the *Forbes* list of the world's richest men. His career ended December 2, 1993, in a hail of police machine-gun fire that caught him as he fled barefoot over the rooftop of a suburban house in Medellin, Colombia's second largest city and home of Escobar's cartel.

"We won!" shouted the jubilant hit squad as they raised their guns over Escobar's body. Throughout Colombia, as well as in the US, police and politicians celebrated the successful end to the 16-month long manhunt. Escobar's chief rival, the Cali cartel, also celebrated as they quickly moved to consolidate their position in the drug trade. In contrast, thousands of Escobar's supporters, mostly poor and young, mourned his death. To them, Escobar was a rags-to-riches folk hero who defied the power structure and did good deeds like building housing projects and soccer fields in working class neighborhoods.

Escobar's Robin Hood image was, in fact, part of a carefully orchestrated public relations strategy by his closest advisors, bankers, lawyers, handlers and aides-de-camp. Ramon Milian-Rodriguez, who was Escobar's top money launderer and part of his inner circle, recalls, "We wanted to build him a power base and this was something his professional cadre put together. He wanted recognition, he wanted the respect his monetary affluence demanded. And somebody said, 'Why don't we make this guy a politician?' There was an election coming up for his hometown, Envigado. Someone suggested, 'Why don't we build about 1,000 homes?' and someone else said, 'God, what a great idea. Pablo can give housing to about 4,000-5,000 poor people. We'll get all this great PR, we'll create jobs for hundreds of people, Envigado will take off, and we'll make all this money because all the stuff for these houses will be supplied by us.' A win-win situation. So that's where he got his Robin Hood image."

The campaign worked. Escobar won a seat as an alternate member of the Colombian Senate. "Immediate recognition," says

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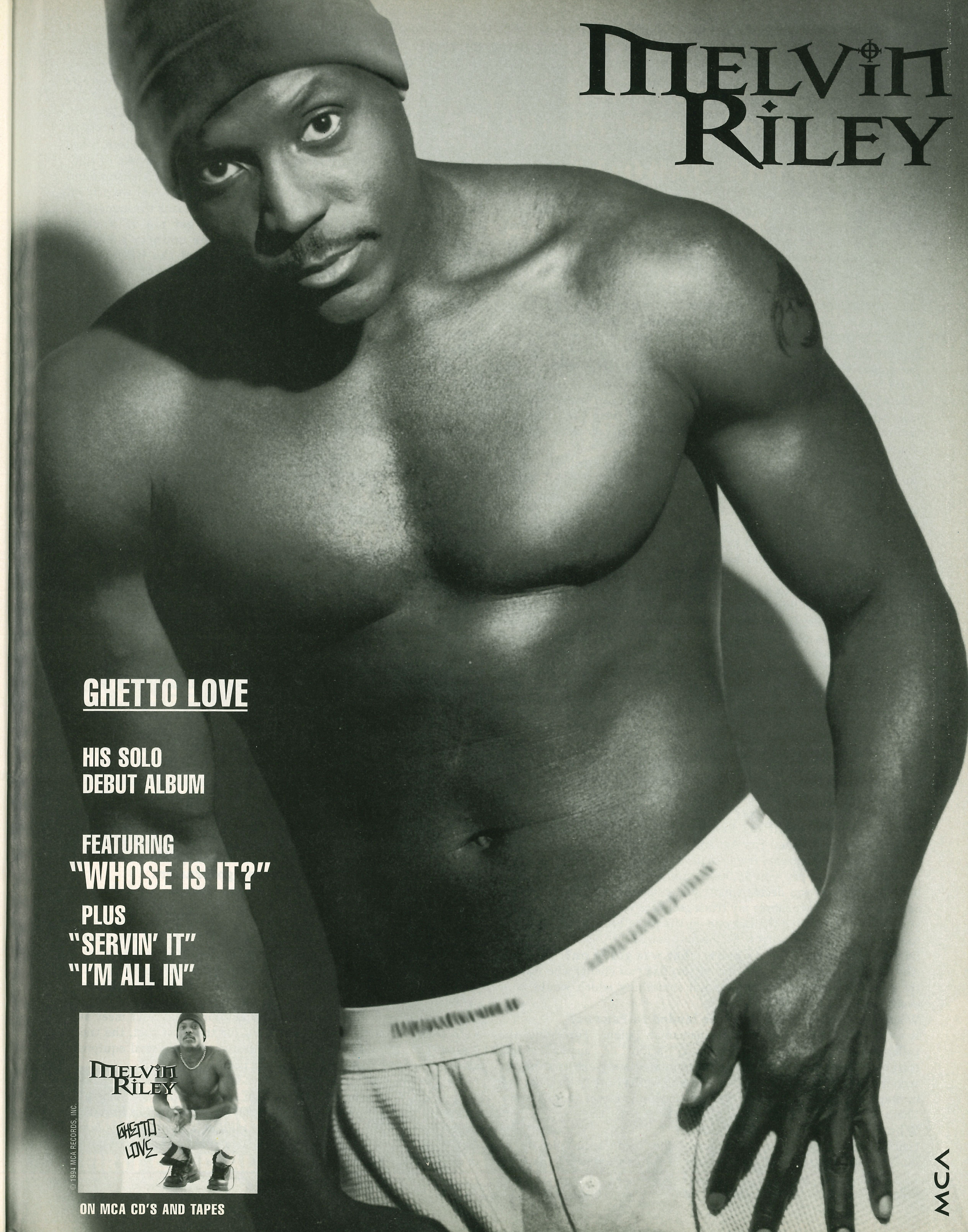
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someone goes in to rip off the main safe house, they're going to have tremendous difficulty getting out.

Outside this safe house were six to ten smaller, satellite safe houses, collection points, where your couriers go originally. They are out on the street, picking up small amounts [like] $100,000, $200,000 or $300,000 at a time from drug dealers, the actual merchants. Each packet was held together with bank straps and the courier would sign the strap with his code and put his client's code as well. So we could go back and tell exactly who handed us any bad bills.

This money is picked up under tremendous danger because you have the drug dealers present, there could be surveillance from police, rival drug dealers or just plain thieves. The couriers were mostly Colombians. The dealers would be anyone, every ethnic group around. But the dealers are *never* part of your inside operation.

Each courier had a beautiful tooled leather accounting bag with a large double flap. Every CPA in the world has a similar accounting bag, but I adapted it for money couriering so it could hold $300,000.

After the street pick up, the couriers go to one location where several couriers drop off loads. So you could end up having two or three million dollars there. Then a different courier would leave the main safe house and go to this little safe house to take the two or three million dollars back. None of the street couriers knew the exact location of the main safe house. This insured that if any one of them got taken and tortured, they could only give the location of a relatively small amount of money.

At the main safe house, the money was scrutinized for counterfeiting and separated—all the hundreds together, all the twenties, all facing the same direction. And then coded, sealed, packed into specially designed boxes. Then it was put in one of our beautiful delivery vans from one of our companies, Consolidated Courier Services based in Miami. Consolidated owned a small fleet of trucks. If you saw one of our trucks go by, you would have thought we were just like Federal Express.

So the next step is to get the money from the hub to a bank?

Yes. You need to get this money into the system somehow. Laundering takes many different forms. The most rudimentary is you must get this money into the banking system because it's losing tons of interest per hour. The best way of doing that was to have an international courier with an IATA [International Aviation and Transportation Administration] license who can consolidate and commingle merchandise from many sources into one huge package. The package is assembled on top of a wooden pallet, the courier puts my money in the middle and he makes up an air weight bill and calls it whatever you want [like] office supplies. He does all the commercial paperwork. There's no customs inspection. And that consolidated pallet, that container, gets raised up by a fork lift, put on a plane and flown to a hub location. Panama is a hub location.

What airlines did you use?

We started with Braniff and Braniff went broke, then Eastern and Eastern went broke, then Pan Am and Pan Am went broke. We would bribe the station managers from whatever airline we were using. We'd say, "I'm going to pay you $5,000 a month because you're the head honcho here, and you decide what pallet gets on the plane and when. So here's our deal: whenever my truck gets here with one of my pallets, you make sure that it's the last one on the plane because when it gets to Panama, I want my pallet to be the first one off."

Did the station managers know what was going on?

Absolutely not. They thought that we just had rich clients who wanted their stuff immediately. This was not something which would raise eyebrows.

What happened when the plane landed in Panama?

It was met by soldiers from the Panamanian Defense Forces and the pallets taken off and taken to the Banco Nacional de Panama [Panama National Bank] where the money was immediately credited to our account. I had hundreds of accounts, but we had one which got the money into circulation and started earning interest immediately. That's something I negotiated.

Who did you work with in Panama?

Henry Ford [whose brother Guillermo or Billy Ford was installed by the Bush Administration as Vice President of Panama following the 1989 US invasion] was my partner in Panama. We were partners in the armored car company which transferred the money in the bank Banco Consolidado. Our business interests were inextricably intertwined.

When did Ford start working for the cartel?

Probably 1978, 1979. Henry was Minister of State of Panama, his nephew was my roommate in college. I had known Henry all my adult life. I'd go to Panama in summers with my roommate. It was like family. And so when I needed Panama locked up, Henry locked it up for me. And we paid off [General Manuel] Noriega to help us transport and bank the money.

But in 1989, the US invaded Panama to get rid of Noriega because, the government said, he was the country's biggest drug trafficker. And now you're saying that the US put into office an even bigger drug trafficker, Henry Ford?

That's right. You had the American government and 24,000 soldiers invade the country. They took out that vile, ruthless dictator [Noriega] and installed a government who was bought and paid for by the cartel. If that's not scandalous, what is.

Besides banking your money, you were also setting up companies. How did that work?

You need plausible fronts for anything you do. If you wish to have a warehouse in which you want to keep money or arms or drugs, you have to provide a reason for its existence. So you create a company as a front. You give it the legal work required and then you give it some substance.

Give me an idea of the kinds of companies you created.

Pension funds in Spain and Liechtenstein. Very, very large timber companies in Brazil. Banks in Colombia and Panama. Pharmaceuticals because they are profitable and they provide the raw chemicals you need. Airlines, freighters because they provide transportation. Mercedes dealerships because the Colombians like to drive Mercedes. At one time, we had a casino in Aruba. Basically, the money went from drugs into other vertical and horizontal activities.

We set up interlocking companies to assure anonymity. If you have a company set up out of the island of Curacao, it looks more legitimate than Panama. But the owner of the Curacao company is a Panama company. Having cut outs creates havoc for any sort of law enforcement.

You know the children's game where there's a square missing and you move it around? If you have enough interlocking companies, you can move it in such a way as to block investigations or to give you a direct pipeline to something.

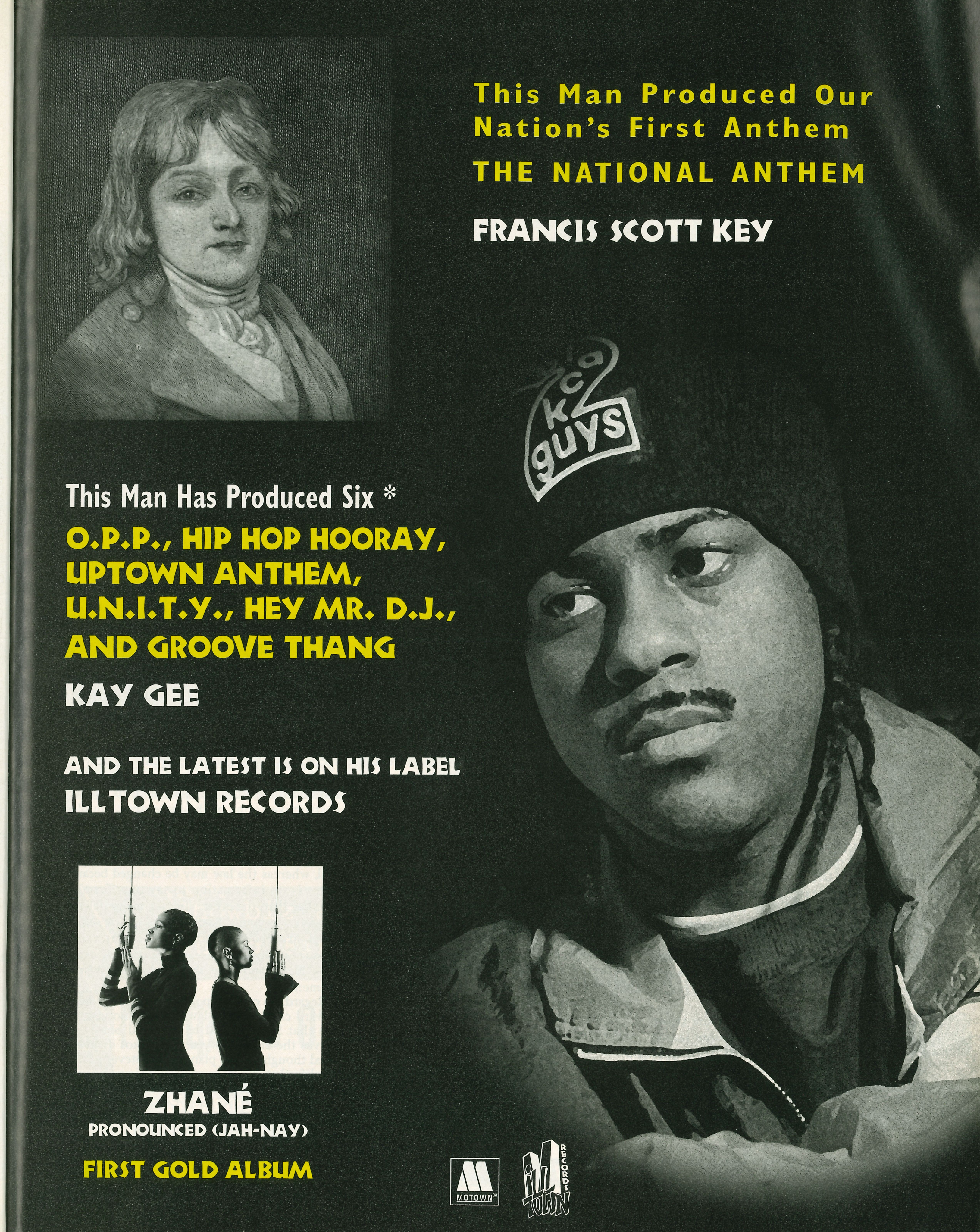
In military terms, you set out pickets. The idea is that the Indians kill the picket first and when you hear your picket scream, you go and get your gun. You have picket companies whose sole job is to draw the attention of law enforcement and when they're hit, you know it's time to get out of town. It becomes very elaborate.

But you were setting up some companies which were connected to both the cartel and the CIA. They were moving drugs for the cartel and also helping the CIA to move guns and money for the Nicaraguan Contras at a time when the US Congress had halted all the funding for their fight against the progressive Nicaraguan government.

Somewhere along the line, the lines got blurred. For instance, in Frigerificos de Puntarenas [a Costa Rican-based seafood exporting company] we actually had ships go out and fish. What a neat idea. You load up a plane with fish and drugs coming into the US and arms coming back. You give those who want plausible deniability what they want.

So when you ask, what is the link between the CIA and drugs, the answer—which can never be proven—is this: inside any intelligence operation there are projects which cannot meet oversight [by supervising agencies] under any condition. So anything that can't meet oversight is funded with drug money. And for the most part, the trail is erased. You destroy the paper, you destroy the physical equipment used and—if you have to—you kill the people. Ⓢ

To be continued. Next month, Ramon Milian-Rodriguez remembers when he met Pablo Escobar and the other key personalities in cocaine's largest cartel, what he did with his $2 million-a-month salary, how he finally got busted by the Feds, and the fate of the hundreds of millions of dollars that he had tucked away.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Putting Morals Aside

A Virginia State University student gets 30 years for selling crack.

TERROL SPRUELL, 29, IN HIS CELL AT ESTILL FEDERAL CORRECTIONS INSTITUTION IN SOUTH CAROLINA, HIS HOME FOR THE NEXT 25 YEARS

MATT MENDOLSOHN/USA TODAY

Most Black parents dream of the day they can send their children to college. It's the ultimate high, picturing their children as lawyers and doctors, giving them the chance to be somebody, to get out of the ghetto and do things that they couldn't. No parent expects their child to go to college and become a drug dealer, but that's the reality for Terrol Spruell's mother and grandmother. He set aside all the "family values" they taught him and became a cocaine dealer during his sophomore year at Virginia State.

"Sometimes you have to put your morals aside," says Spruell, a 29-year-old inmate at the Federal Corrections Institution in Estill, South Carolina, incarcerated for the distribution of crack cocaine two months before graduating from VSU with a bachelor's degree in sociology. "In my case, I put my morals aside to make money.

"I just got tired of struggling. Every time I'd call and ask [my mother and grandmother] for some money, they'd be like, 'You know Terrol, I just sent you some money, what did you do with it?' I just got tired of that and told them, 'Look, don't worry about me, just take care of my daughter [an infant at the time]. Terrol will take care of Terrol.'"

A friend of his told him about a business venture that could turn his $400 rent and telephone bill money into whatever he wanted if he had the desire, sense and know-how to make it work. With his newfound independence, Spruell took him up on the offer. He invested his $400 into this "surefire" business venture—dealing cocaine. "I looked at [selling coke] as a stepping stone to help me pay my bills, help pay my tuition and help me save for my future business ventures after I got out of school." He planned on starting either a women's hair care salon or convenience store in Washington, DC, once he graduated.

Unlike most dealers, Spruell admits he didn't *have* to deal drugs. He wasn't strapped for money; he just wanted to live comfortably. "I was part of the now generation. I didn't want to wait to have it all, I wanted the money now—that's how a lot of the brothers get caught up, they want it now."

Spruell gave up dealing on the street after the first year and became a minor league supplier, servicing only two or three people who he knew he could trust. "It [street dealing] was cutting into my school time. I couldn't do my work," he said. "I tried to schedule my classes between 10 and 2, I'd hang out in front of Foster Hall (VSU's student activity center) for awhile, go to the library and study, do my papers. I'd try to get my academic work done because I knew that that night I would be in the drug world," he said.

His juggling scheme worked, unnoticed, for about a year. Spruell found out during his trial that he had been under federal surveillance as a drug ringleader from 1987 until his arrest in October 1989. The investigation had yet to turn up any viable information until they caught James Ward, a six-year associate of Spruell's, for a robbery that involved drugs. As part of a deal, Ward agreed to set Spruell up to sell five ounces of crack to a Drug Enforcement Agency agent.

Under the 1986 federal crime bill, anyone convicted of possessing five grams of crack gets a mandatory five-year prison term. Since Spruell was caught with 150 grams of crack and was tried as a drug ring leader, he got 30 years in jail with no parole. Caught at 24-years-old, he won't get out until he's 54.

Ironically, under the same law, anyone convicted of possessing five grams of powder cocaine only gets 10 months probation. This stipulation, giving unequal time to equally destructive forms of the same drug, coupled with several technicalities in his case, has prompted Spruell to appeal his case. "I think the political climate has changed, it's more liberal, whereas the law may be changed because there is no information to say one [form] is deadlier than the other." In fact, many defense lawyers for young Blacks convicted of selling crack are protesting that the law is racist because it singles out the drug used by many poor Blacks and gives them the harshest punishment.

Regardless of what political strides are made toward changing the law, there is no guarantee that Spruell will be released before he serves the entire 30 years. He's not disheartened though, he has plans for whatever year of his life that he gets out. "I'm going to spend time with my daughter [who will be 31 when his bid is done]. At least I know one woman will love me when I get out." Sometimes you have to put your morals aside, huh?

BY SHAWNEE SMITH

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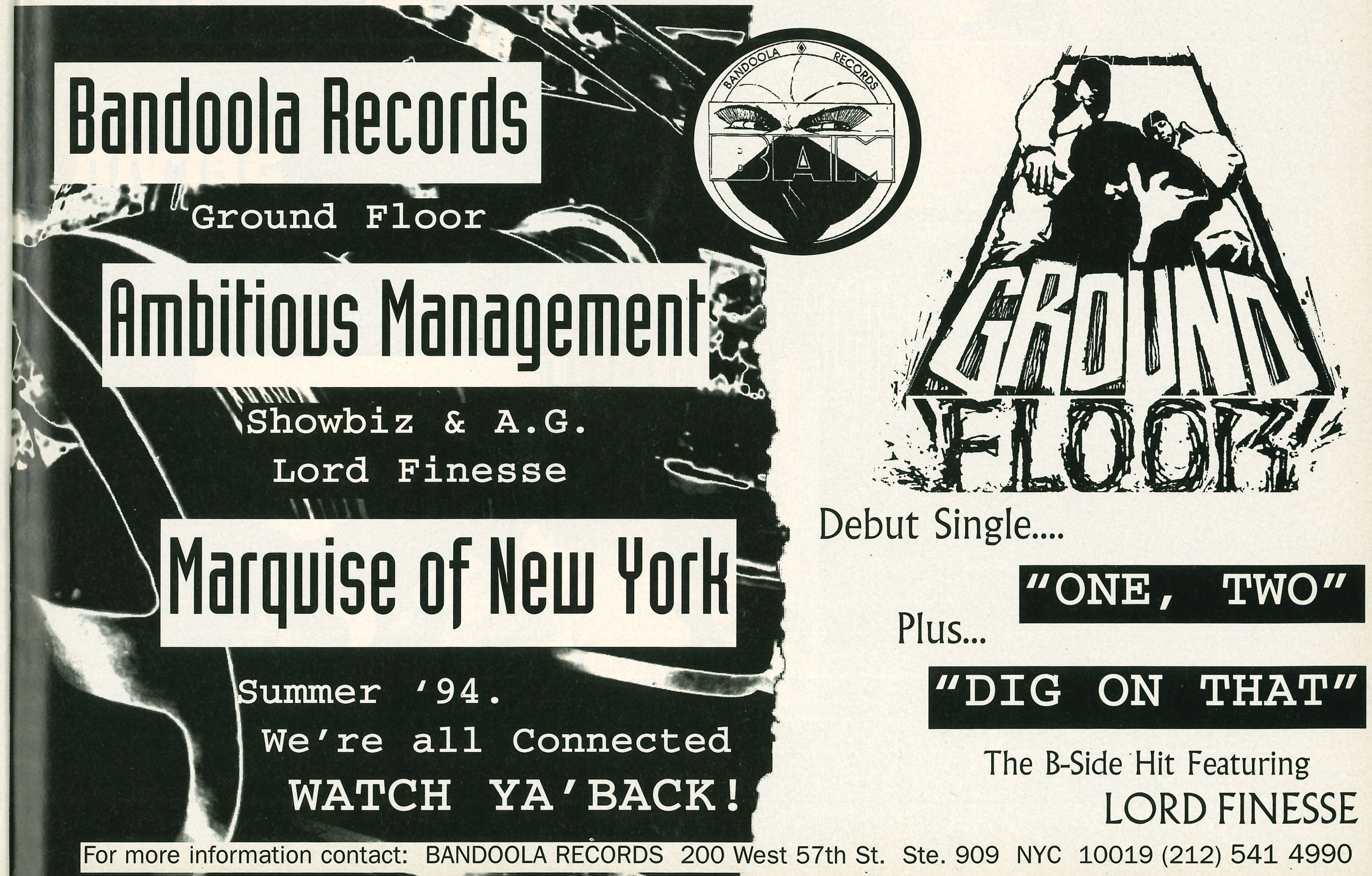

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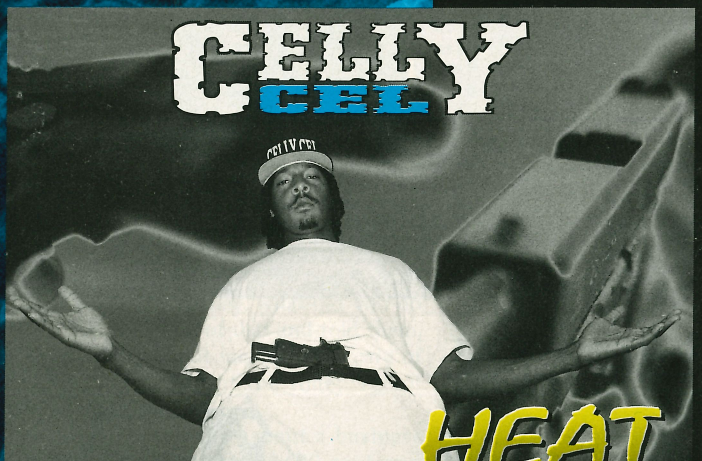
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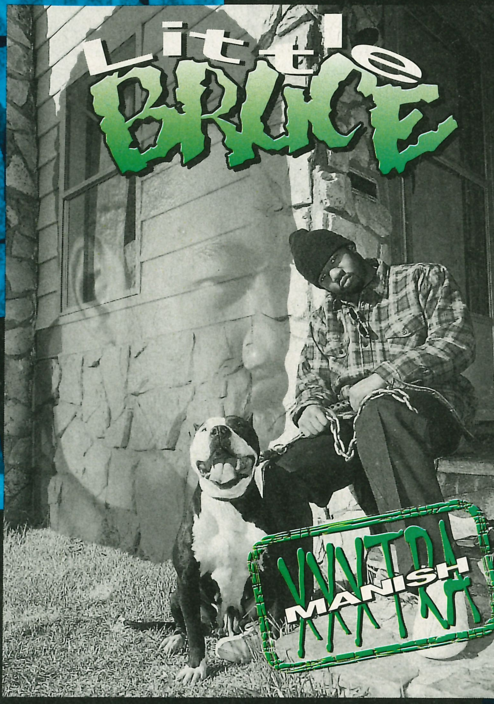
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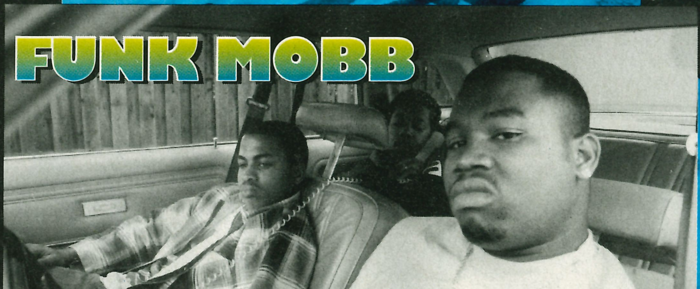
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The spirit of disorder is the trickster.
The function of his mythology is to add
disorder to order and make a whole. —Karl Kerenyi

PART I: Boogie Man

Me and the manager catch a cab down to Battery Park trailing the ever-illusive MC/DJ Flavor Flav on his maroon, fresh-out-the-box, Honda ST-1100. He's weaving in and out of traffic, and the cabbie laughs at our instructions to follow him. "He's driving too crazy," he shakes his head. At a red light, Flavor pulls up to our window and peers in. "Y'all a-ight?" he asks with a smile—the same genuine, mischievous smile he had given me earlier when he offered me some of his ham and cheese back at Def Jam. Someone, of course, felt the need to comment. "Flav, what you doin' eatin' swine?" Flavor, droppin' hella crumbs, rippin' away more ham with his teeth, responded: "You must be confusing me with Chuck 'cause Flav ain't never come out against pork. Know'm sayin', G? Word," his words trailing off into his infamous Mutley snicker. He's snickering even now at the cab window as we suggest that maybe *he* should follow *us*. "I ain't mad," he says pulling his face from the window, swerving his motorcycle and falling in line behind us. Mustafa, our driver, glances back to ask if that's really Flavor.

"I saw him when he came to perform in Ghana," he tells us. "In the slave dungeons. It was wonderful."

We get there and wait in a light breeze as Mustafa gets an autograph for his daughter. "Yeeeaah, let's do this, G!" Flav exclaims, finally ready to be interviewed. Mustafa nods his thanks.

The sea is churning uncomfortably, wrinkling its surface with seemingly conflicting currents. Flav speaks about the water like an old friend. "It's usually calmer than this. But I love the water. No matter how polluted it is." The gray-green abyss seems indifferent to Flav's kind words, still churning quietly, refracting the late afternoon sun like the glass on a ghetto sidewalk.

Flavor adjusts the oversized black netting laying on his head. It falls like that strange mushroom Dumb Donald used to sport on *Fat Albert*. Gone is the unwieldy shock of jagged, uneven dreads that sprung from under his top hat in "Can't Truss It". They're replaced now, with what at first glance looks like a crooked mohawk. But like almost everything else about Flav, it's an eye prank, needing closer inspection. The mohawk is actually a dome-sized *backwards* "F" to be read exclusively by basketball players, God and low-flying birds. But the visual flim-flam is typical of PE's ghetto trickster, who even after seven years in the national spotlight, still remains as mysterious and as misunderstood as he ever was.

"They don't know my style or my history. They take things on face value. Or hearsay. That's why we wrote the song 'Don't Believe the Hype.' You can't believe everything you hear. You can't even believe everything you see."

Even as they dissected the rest of PE to death, the press couldn't figure him. He was side-stepped. To some, Flavor was the signifyin' spook—a modern-day minstrel in coon's clothing (top hat, tuxedos, white gloves). To others, he was a bizarre addendum to Public Enemy's agenda to assert an image of intelligent, uncompromised Black manhood. Here was this enigmatic clown turning kooky ideas into pop iconography. Giant clocks, bat glasses— and yo, why was he sucking on a baby bottle?

Still, Flav got love. Much love because the ghetto embraced him as

BY ROBERT MARRIOTT

photography by chi modu / c²

family. Granted, the nigga was bugged, but he was family. Like your crazy-ass cousin from Brownsville. To the rest of the world, he was like a Black ET—alien, but lovable. Nobody really understood him.

But neither did PE at first. Chuck D remembers the first time he encountered the phenomenon of Flav. "It was actually on a building in Freeport, Long Island. I read something that said 'Flavor' and I'd be like, tryin' to figure out who made that sloppy lookin' graffiti." During the developmental stages of PE, people weren't so sure where Flavor would fit. Rick Rubin, who brought PE to Def Jam, didn't want him. To the crew, he had always been a kind of misfit, the butt of everybody's jokes. During snap sessions Hank and Keith Shocklee and Chuck D, then known as the Spectrum City DJs, would gang up on the then jheri-curled MC Flavor. "He had a jheri-curl that look like a. . . a well-oiled bird's nest," Chuck recalls. "I was killin' him. First day I seen him I was killin' 'im." These were the days at Adelphi University where the people who would later be responsible for classic albums like *Yo, Bumrush the Show* and *Nation of Millions* converged upon a small radio station, WBAU.

At this point, Chuck was still a radio jock for the Super Spectrum Mix Hour and would help produce tapes for local crews. "I remember the first time I saw him," Chuck laughs. "Son of Bazerk brought this guy up unannounced to make a tape and I was looking at this guy, yelling at Bazerk on why he brought this muthafucka up here. He said, 'This is Flavor.' Flav was one of those Freeport icons but I didn't make a big deal about it. He was dressed in all black—a Black muthafucka in a black jacket, black jherri-curl, black keyboard, a black fuckin' pack of cigarettes." Through hangin' out, snappin' and makin' music, Flav became a fixture. The snap ciphers would more than capitalize on his eccentric ways. Flavor, however, felt he held his own. "I got up there to the studio and Chuck, Keith and Hank Shocklee, we was all up in the office, so we started snappin'—the mother jokes and the whole nine. So all three of them was against me. And I was rippin' all three of them. By myself! They didn't understand what was in me that was makin' me tick like that. Ever since then I would go up and see them and I became a part of their system." Chuck remembers it differently: "We used to destroy him in snappin'," he laughs. "And Flav, he the type to wear nine, ten light spring jackets in the winter time so you know. . . "

Amidst the jeers and side comments of his crew, Flavor would walk around with a big suitcase full of clacking, jangling street tapes trying to get 'em played on the radio. "Look at Rico with them bullshit-ass tapes," was the usual comment. But Flavor, a skilled musician, believed in his ability. "Fuck y'all!" he'd respond and turn to Bill Stephney, then program director of BAU, trying to persuade him to play his shit. "Hey yo Bill," he'd say, with the familiar Flav exuberance, "this is my latest jam. Ya *got* to rock this shit, G!"

Determination paid off. Not only were his tapes played, but by the time Def Jam showed an interest in Chuck, Flav was making humorous cuts with DJ Mellow D (now known as Terminator X) like "Party In My Pants" for his own radio show. "This is a rap for all you fresh females," he'd rap, "I hate sometimes when I speak to a girl/That don't speak back like she's the queen of the world/I just tryina be nice and set a sweet caper/You think you stuck-up/You should see my wallpaper." He even had a fan club—The Flavortrons, membership cards and all. Still Def Jam didn't see a place for Flavor in a proto-nationalist rap group. But Chuck's instinct told him otherwise. "I said, 'You bring me, you gotta bring Flavor along.' They were like, 'I know you got the fucking voice but yo, why we need this muthafucka?' I said, 'Yo man I can't explain what he does, he just Flavor.'"

His kinetic jigs— frantic, exaggerated— express our urgent need to be rid of those psychological, systematic shackles that bind us.

For Chuck, it was mostly the voice. "Flavor don't put lyrics to music, he put vocals to it," he says. "The simple reason why we work together is just the contrast in our voices. People try to come up with intellectual reasons for 'the noise' and it ain't nothing intellectual. We was just making BAU tapes and needed voices to cut through that shit. Flavor got a powerful trebly voice, with cut. I got some bass with treble and pitch, which also cuts. So you put me and Flavor together and it's basically like Bobby Bird and James Brown—*Everybody over here! Get on up!* The Bird/Brown combination set off everything."

Flavor, of course, offered more to Public Enemy than vocal contrast. His lyrics, for one. On cuts like the definitive "Cold Lampin' With Flavor," Flav creates sprawling, drunken images that play like those dreams you have after spicy food.

You eatin' death 'cause you like gettin' dirt from the graveyard/You put gravy on it/Now you picking your teeth with tombstone chips/Casket cover clips/Dead women hips you do the bump with/Bones nothin' but love bones/ Lifestyles of the livin' dead/First ya live then you're dead—died tryin' clock what I said/Now I got a murder rap/'Cause I bust ya cap/With Flavor/Pure Flavor. . .

What seemed like nonsensical rhymes-for-rhyme sake was actually heavy metaphor. "I wrote that off of actual experience from the streets." He tells me, still looking toward the Hudson River. "I just put it in different code where you don't know what I'm sayin' but you *know* I'm sayin' something." He cackles. "Now what I mean by you eatin' death is this. Out here, right? In the streets—it's one big graveyard. The reason why I call it the graveyard is because someone always pushin' drugs up in your face. So somebody will get a key of cocaine and that's the dirt comin' from the graveyard. And if you're using it, you eatin' it. So you eatin' the death that you get from the graveyard. And it's so much that you're like, *coke, coke, coke,*" He grabs at the air wildly. " Then you overdose and you die. Now you in the graveyard picking your teeth with tombstone chips and casket-covered clips. Now back in the days, we used to do this dance called the bump. And they used to have this TV commercial on Channel 11 that went 'Love songs, nothing but love songs' so I said, 'And dead women's hips you do the *bump* with/bones nothing but love bones. Life styles of the living dead/first you live then you're dead and ya die tryin' to clock what I said.'" Again, he laughs, *skk-sskk-sskk-ha-ha*, tickled by his own lyrics. "Yeah man, I'm just tryina bring out the new languages, the new slangs."

He was our let-go, allowing us escape from the realities of oppression Chuck D made his duty to remind us of. If Chuck sought to raise our consciousness, Flav sought our subconscious. If Chuck our reasoned attempts at fighting our perpetual oppression, then Flavor was the possibility of a riot. Flavor fits within PE's conception of black militancy simply because Flavor is slave to no one. He is the super-Black nigga left to his own devices, embodying what can only be called metaphysical ghetto freedom. "Flavor Flav," he says "is the unexpected."

In Haiti, practitioners of the Voodoo religion, worship Ghede, guardian of bones, god of the dead. In the mythology, he sits at the entrance of the graveyard and governs the principal of regeneration—sex, death and children. When he possesses somebody in ritual, his main goal is to cause laughter, chaos and above all, to be as "unexpected," as you'd expect Death to be. He is known for his lurid dancing, his "ke ke ke ke" laughter, his voracious hunger. He wears top hats, dark glasses and loves making strange jokes with double, sometimes triple meaning. He is described as being "both tattered and beautiful." He is the king of zombies.

In the video "911 is A Joke" Flavor rhymes from a casket, dressed in bat glasses and pajamas, as children dressed as Flavor parade about. The camera catches him eating sandwiches with two hands. In "Night of the Living Baseheads," Flavor leads the "zombies" in dance. I can go on and on. The laughter, the top hat, the dancing, down to his predilection for children are too coincidental to be random. Flavor is a ghetto Ghede incarnate. As Maya Deren put it in describing Ghede, "clown though he may be, he is also history"—a history that even Flav seems only slightly aware of.

But is it enough to say that this nigga got the hoodoo? The Ghede/Flavor connection not only suggests that hip-hop is just some ol' urban voodoo shit but that there may be some ancient method to Flavor's madness.

Flavor Flav is not just a rapper. At his most creative, he is a medium. His kinetic jigs—frantic, exaggerated, as if demanding to be unburdened—express our urgent need to be rid of those psychological, systematic shackles that bind us. Together Chuck and Flav articulated the code for Black psyche survival: Never forget. Never surrender. And if all else fails, then bug the fuck out.

To believe Flav is a fool or some kinda Sambo is to again fall for the flim-flam. Flav could rework racist imagery for revolutionary purposes. Back in the day, white gloves when worn by bellhops and singing minstrels was a sign of servitude, but on Flavor, slave wear turns to battle gear. Flav's white gloves played on the respect and authority of Black church ushers. And in "Can't Truss It" he wore white *batter's* gloves, which is as much as restating Malcolm X's demand for niggas "to stop singin' and start swingin'." Sambo? Huh. I could see Flavor just bus'in Stepin Fetchit dead in his mouth.

During the photo shoot, Flav suddenly looks to the left of us. "That guy I had trouble with just came out of the building." His jaw tightens.

William 'Rico' Drayton spent his formative years in the streets of Freeport, Long Island later Roosevelt being young and, as you can imagine, crazy. "I've always spontaneously combusted," he smiles, thinkin' back to his childhood. "I was a Dennis the Menace type. Always gettin' beatings. She'd use an extension cord and make me take off every stitch of clothes I got. Even my draws, G. You get beatings butt-naked back in them days. Today y'all are lucky, y'all got pads." He went to school in Roosevelt (sometimes with long sleeve shirts to hide the whip marks) where he attended ninth grade along with Eddie Murphy. "We'd go to the parties at the Evolution and snap in the park. Eddie was dope [at snappin'] but I was the dopest. I'm still the dopest."

He got his stage name from his late uncle, Kevin Starks, who'd call him "Reek the Flavorful."

"I wanted to have a name that nobody had, that nobody wanted. I wanted to be out of the ordinary. So I tried MC Flavor. But it had to mean something too," He stresses. "Flavor is in everything you eat, drink, everything you do. Flavor is everything, in everything. I'm not mad 'cause everybody got me, Flavor."

He speaks often of his five children, Shanique, Da'Zyna, Karren, William Jr. and Quanah. He wants more. "I ain't finished, I want ten more a these maufuckas."

Would you ever beat your kids?

"If I had to. You doggone right. I tear 'em up." We both laugh. " From limb to limb. From every finger, toe. Ay . . ."

I ask him if he sees himself in his children. "Sure I do and it bugs me out."

Why?

His eyes widen. "To see doubles and triples of yourself? That's bugged. And my last two, Da'Zyna and Quanah, their mother is Spanish. So I was buggin' out 'cause I'm lookin' at lightskin Flavors. I never seen me in lightskin! Word up!"

His children have begun banging on pots and drums and pianos continuing what seems to be a family tradition. Flavor's Aunt Sara still plays organ and piano for Bethem A.M.E. Church in Freeport, his uncle James penned songs for Nat King Cole and his mother was a classically trained concert pianist. A multi-instrumentalist, Flav can play the oboe, tuba, violin, drums, and piano (to name a few) but cannot read music. "I play by ear. I can play anything you give me, except a Chinese flute. And gimme two weeks with a Chinese flute. I bus' that shit." He was a DJ too, "one of the first on Long Island. Word. Before there were mixers." His gestures come alive explaining to me how he'd mix records with the radio, turning the volume down as the song on the radio ends and turning the volume up on a record. "Flavor is the only member of PE that could go into a studio and make an entire record by himself," notes Bill Stephney. "He is probably the most talented member of the group." Once, while waiting in the lobby of the Nikko Hotel in Cali, Flav out of boredom sat at the lobby piano and proceeded to play an intense medley of classical music. Everyone watched in silent amazement as Flav changed pace and tempo at lightning speed. Flavor suddenly aware of his audience stopped and began haphazardly banging at the keys.

PART II: Boogie Land

Suckers liars gimme a shovel/Some writers I know are damn devils/For them I say don't believe the hype /Yo, Chuck they must be on the pipe, right?

The suckers, liars and devils of the mainstream press would finally break it's silence on Flav in late summer, 1990. They reported on his 20 day jail term for allegedly assaulting his girlfriend. Flav described the incident as a "disagreement." "We had a fight, period. And that was it. We were in love. Everything ain't always gonna be peaches and cream, you gonna have your ups and your downs. " He and Karren Ross, mother of his three eldest children, still have a bond, he says. "And it will always be that way."

But then there was the incident last November. He was charged for attempted murder when in a fit of anger he shot a round after his neighbor, Thelouisz English. The tabloids went nut. The New York Post: 'PUBLIC' MENACE. The Daily News: MURDER-TRY CHARGE FOR ENEMY RAPPER. News cameras followed him as he was led away from a Bronx precinct by three surly white cops. William Drayton, the man we never knew, suddenly appeared. He was angry, disoriented. Cops, witnesses described him as "incoherent and possibly intoxicated." His lawyer admitted he had been up for three nights in a row, but declined to say why. Flav, it seemed, had succumbed to his vices.

But it got worst. In the press Flav, along with Tupac and Snoop, became part of an unholy trinity of rap demons. If white media didn't understand Flavor Flav as part of Public Enemy, they certainly understood an angry, disoriented Black man in cuffs. White writers who thought "911 is a Joke" was an anti-cop song became instant authorities on the dangers of hip-hop, using Flavor as an example of how destructive rap music is to our kids, to our "civilized" American society.

How much of his troubles spawned from his drug addiction is unclear, but as Flavor would tell MTV news, drugs were a major factor in his troubles. "At that time, I was going through certain pressures in my life. Thought-trauma." It all sounded like a PE album. His future with the group was in doubt.

The pressure of stardom, being the target of so much love and hatred, compounded by having to stand in the vortex of a small race war of

IN HAITI, THOSE POSSESSED BY THE VOODOO GOD OF THE DEAD, GHEDE, MAKE JOKES, DRESS IN TOP HATS AND DARK GLASSES AND ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR "KE KE KE" LAUGH.

PHOTO TAKEN FROM *MAMA LOLA*

your own making, can take its toll on anyone. The pressure of being PE would create an even bigger cynic of Chuck D and cause the coalition created at BAU to splinter. But with Flav the guillotine came down particularly hard. Flavor's simple explanation of his drug use was that "life wasn't right." But was it just life? Was there something in the group dynamic of PE that made Flavor more vulnerable?

There was a basic understanding among the heads in the Bomb Squad that in the "reach the bourgeois and rock the boulevard,"concept Flavor *was* the boulevard. "I like to keep it real." Flav explains, "That's why alot of people can relate to me because I bring that real street feel."

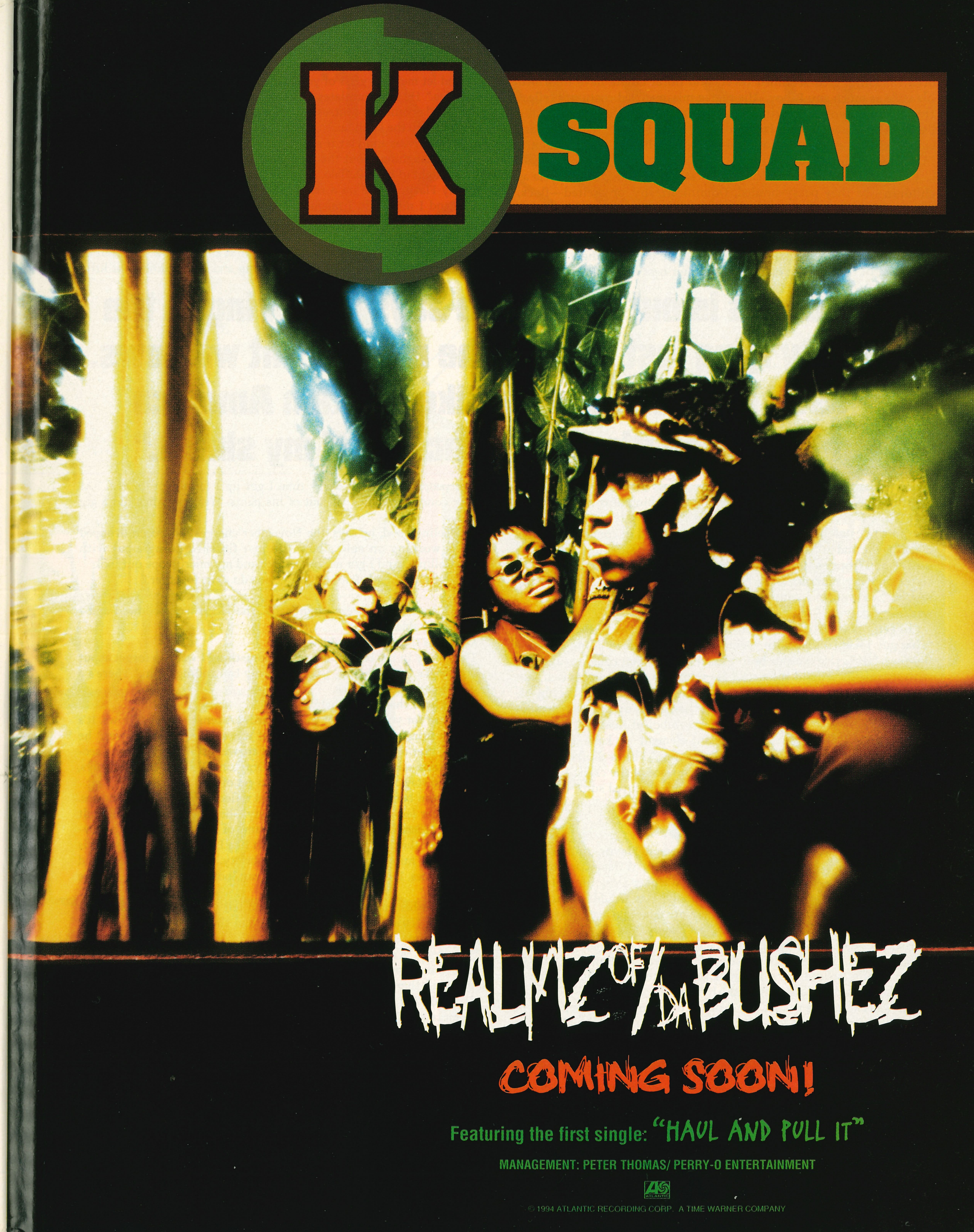
"He represented a more common man," says Bill Stephney. "In fact, he probably saved PE from being considered 'alternative' rap. In many ways, Flav could be that Everyman in ways that well-spoken Chuck or any of the other group members couldn't." But as Enemy's Black Everyman, he also became their testing ground. The full weight of PE's political, sometimes contradictory dogma was laid upon Flavor's shoulders. Flav became responsible for fulfilling Enemy prophecy.

So once Flav's troubles became public, the question for most people became if PE couldn't transform a member of their own group, how could they transform a nation of millions? Somewhere along the way, Flavor Flav/William Drayton lost his right to human error. Would the implications of his drug addiction and legal troubles have been so damning had he just been William Drayton, frustrated genius, talented musician, not Flavor Flav, mascot of PE's revolution? "Everybody got individual lives," Flav tells me. "You can stand for something, that don't mean it won't happen in your life. Some things are just beyond your control."

Chuck questions the public's expectations of entertainers. "We exist in a time where we're waiting for leadership outta rappers, singers, dancers, ball players, part-time actors and comedians. I mean, *come* on." When asked what he should do with Flavor, he is dismissive. "People think he's my puppet or something. They ask me, how do I deal with this? I'm like shit, he's a grown man, older than me. How can I tell another man what to do?" Nevertheless, some close to the group wonder whether something might not have been done earlier, or whether Flavor's weaknesses might have been glossed over to maintain the group's image.

Whatever the situation, the problem was resolved. "To me, it was a simple thing" says Chuck. "Everybody makes mistakes. I asked Flav, 'Yo are we still family or what? You still down? If you are, then let's work this out." Flav moved into the Betty Ford Clinic and went through a recovery program. He's back and plays a much more central role on *Muse Sick Nhour Mess Age* , PE's sixth release. "No question, this album is his best performance," Chuck says now. "A strong Flavor, makes it much easier on me 'cause he's so naturally talented. I gotta work. He can play fifteen instruments. I can't play lotto. But with this album I seen his commitment."

Geared in a bright-ass sunshine yellow fireman's jacket, Flavor is raising both arms to welcome us to his stomping grounds, the Boogie Down—Every ghetto USA—a beat-up mixture of desolation and carnival, birthplace of hip-hop and land of the dead. Bodegas selling mangoes and plantains on sloping streets corners, children sucking on Nowalaters and drinking florescent blue quarter waters. Flavor is in a good mood, as usual, concerned with making the pictures we plan to take different. Not no normal shit. He's rocking the usual adornment—gold rings on every finger, a Mickey Mouse baseball cap, dark shades and, of course, the oversized clock lying against his chest. Flav wants to take a few shots on Grand Concourse. A small crowd gathers around. A grandmother waits patiently to get a word with Flavor. Her eyes are sprinkled with dark moles and her permed yellow hair —quickly turning kinky—is pulled back in stark contrast to her round brown face and black roots. Her lime green shirt and pants hang loose over her big belly. She is a wily combination of texture and colors which parallels with Flavor's equally odd assortment. It is here that one fully understands the Flavor mystique: street, strictly street. Language, dress,



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demeanor everything. Black women on Easter morning in coffee-colored stockings, gold-sequined berets and floral taffeta have informed his style as much any B-boy. His ragtag mis-matched costumes reflect the do-what-you-can-with-what-have rule of the ghetto. Like Funkadelic, Flavor recognizes no hierarchy of style. Tuxedoes are equalized with sweatsuits, top hats with baseball caps. Flav sees nothing sacred, nothing profane.

Chi Modu catches some flicks of Flav standing on his motorcycle as children—be they peasy-headed, Dominican, shy, or excited—flock, stand to the side and stare, admiring his shiny bike. "That shit is nice, bro," one whispers to another. A skinny girl, her name is N'keisha, still in her Catholic school uniform and a too big Adidas windbreaker, approaches Flav with anxious reverence. She holds a single sheet of loose-leaf in her shaking hand and tries her best to speak. Her efforts are for naught. She is flung into a breathless attack of anxiety. Her mouth agape, she places her hand on her throbbing heart. "Oh...oh, my God. I . . . I . . . can't believe . . . " and there is a tense hush as she attempts to catch her breath. Flavor nods his head in concern, tells her it's all right and runs quickly upstairs to get her an autographed picture. Giddy from excitement, she glances across Grand Concourse. "My sister and my momma is right over there," she tells me, pointing toward two women I cannot see. "I don't care how long he takes, I'll wait here forever."

> **"The drugs is out there," he says referring to the dark city lying just beyond the restaurant windows. "It still calls me. But I'm like Captain America out there and it's just bouncing off my shield."**

Chi gets some last shots, when Flav suddenly turns to the left of us. "That guy I had trouble with, he just came out of the building." His jaw tightens. "Huh, that woulda been a good picture. You coulda caught me with my hands around his neck." He mumbles almost to himself, not laughing whatsoever, then grimaces again for the camera, baring his full mouth of engraved gold fronts and then grabs up the ever-present clock, protective amulet, ticking black symbol of death. "I wear the clock 'cause time is the most important element we have in our life. Time brought us in and time will take us out." Flavor shifts his body for another shot. On the glinting plastic surface of the clock, I notice a jagged grey crack revealing itself in the cloud-obscured sun.

PART III: Love Bones

When asked what the difference between Flavor and William Drayton is, Chuck tells me there is none—except William Drayton got to be accountable for his actions. "What William Drayton realizes is that it's not a Flavor Flav world. Even though Flav would love to drive 120 miles an hour, Drayton knows there are consequences. Flavor will take it to the limit. Sometimes the two get cloudy."

This is one of the cloudy times. It's raining like banshees in the late afternoon and I run into Time Cafe to find Flavor waiting in one of the corner booths, soaked. He's talking a lot, cracking jokes and as often as possible, answers my question with rhymes.

Our waitress comes to take our order. "This is my first table ever," she tells us through a nervous smile. Flavor's manager asks about the Caesar's salad and the waitress quickly pours down a memorized list of ingredients. Flav, smacking loudly on a piece of bread, interrupts. "Ay yo, wasn't Caesar down with them Romans and shit? The chariots?" The waitress is befuddled. There's a pause. Flav continues. "The chariots. That's Caesar, man."

There's a hint of fear in her eyes, so I change the subject. "What sign are you?" I ask. But before she can answer, Flavor pounces. "My sign is Tarantula." He orders grilled barbecued pork chops. No garnish. I order a pizza.

"Oh and let me get a glass of your reddest wine. Something to give me the tingles." He congratulates the waitress on her first table. "Don't mind me," Flav tells the waitress, still loudly smacking on a wafer, as she exits happily to the kitchen.

The food arrives and Flav is slicing into one of his pork chops, sipping wine. He's laughing about the time he fell during a show in Troy, New York. "It might of been Buffalo. Anyway, the lights were on me and I was doing my Flavor dance on a real high speaker. I went to jump off the speaker and I missed it. I misjudged it. I missed and I fell and hit the floor face-first—Bam! Through all that loud music you could hear that crowd dyin'! They was dyin'! That fall was long, but it was quick. It was a long quick fall. I was out of breath like 'Man!' It knocked the wind out of me. So I kept tryina play it off by getting up and falling down but little did the people know that every time I got up I fell down for real." At another concert, his dick fell out of his pants. "Yeah, my dick did a gig too."

He's feeling good, he says, the November charges have been dropped and he's working on solo album. He just finished doing a cut with Bootsy Collins. "And I got my binoculars and my microscope out looking for Puba. But that's Puba, G. We gonna do a cut together."

We eat, I ask, he answers. Night falls. The mood has mellowed and I ask the inevitable.

"What was the crack high like?"

"That's way in the back of my mind. Something I want to forget about so I can make things better. I tryin' get my ball rolling again." There's a strained quality to his voice.

"Was it hard shaking the habit?"

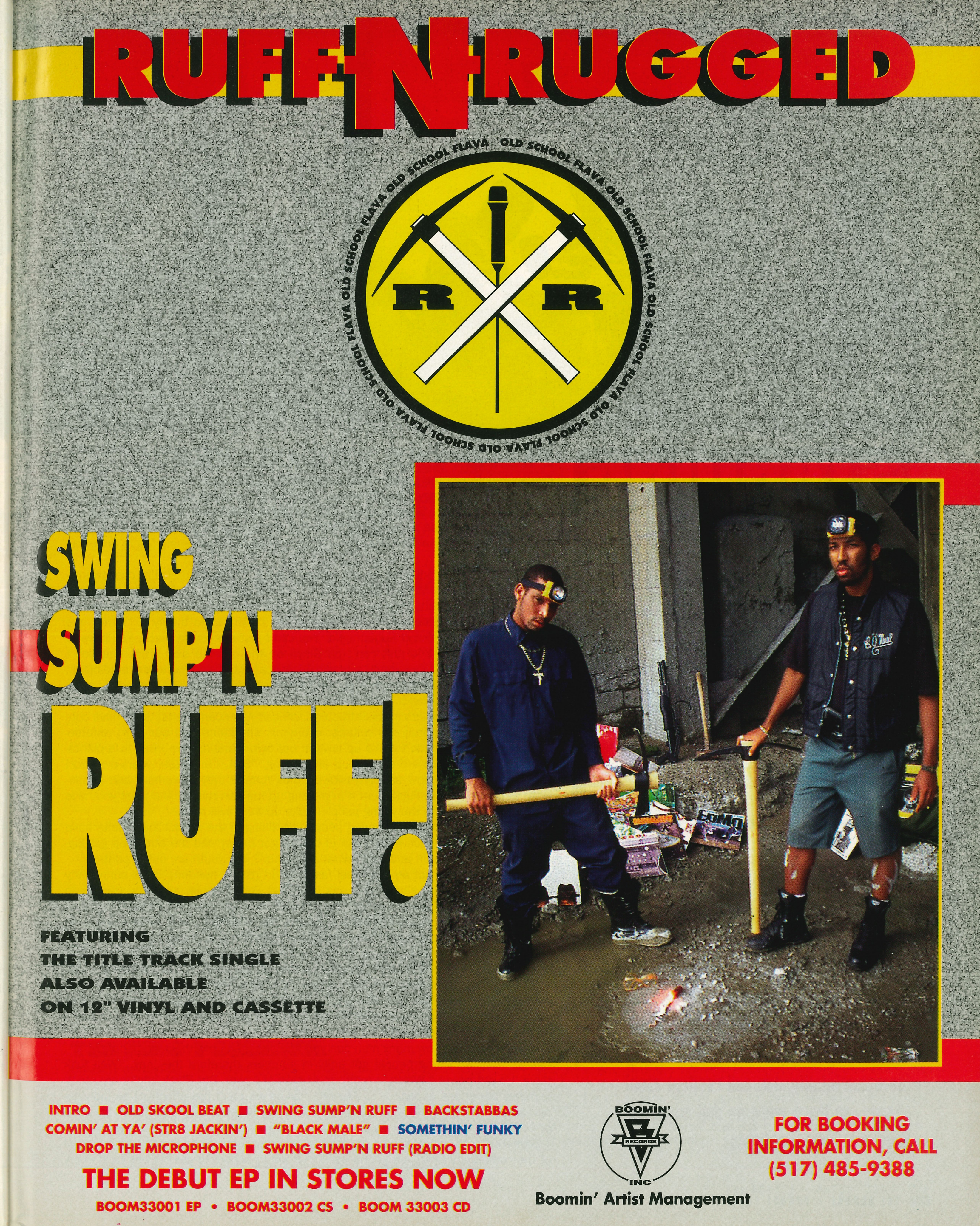
"Is it hard for your dick not to stay hard?" A tense silence follows. It's like we're frozen in our positions. "That was a Flavor Flav answer," he concedes, after a pause. "But I wanna not answer as Flavor Flav for a second. I wanna answer that as William Drayton. William Drayton says, 'It's easy to stay on drugs and it's hard to get off.'"

Even from behind the shades, his eyes reflect the difficult memories. The manager leaves, her eyes a little misty. She remembers the difficult times too. "I had built up to a positive frame of mind. Truthfully, recovery has been the best part of my life. I felt like I was reborn. My mind is different. My mind now is thinking of sobriety. I look in the mirror and see differences. I'm putting weight on. I can look people dead in the eye and mean it."

He says he wants to visit schools to tell young people about his experiences. "Drugs are more powerful than the average man. I wanna tell people that.

"The drugs is out there," he says referring to the dark city lying just beyond the restaurant windows. "It still calls me. But I'm like Captain America out there and it's just bouncing off my shield."

Flav grabs his bike helmet. At this moment he's less myth than man. He is more subdued and slow boppin', the hesitant rhythm of vulnerability in his step. My questions, it seems, have picked at old scabs, opened old wounds. I follow him with my eyes as he, clown, musician, Boogie Man, Jester King enters a gauntlet of eyes, all of which seem to have that here-we-are-now-entertain-us look to them. They stare from the different candlelit tables, all seeming to beg something from him—for him to break into his dance or maybe a "Yeeeeeah, boyeee," something, anything to break the monotony of their lifeless lives. But he leaves instead with quiet dignity, to face the "out there" he spoke of earlier. The eyes are disappointed. Ⓢ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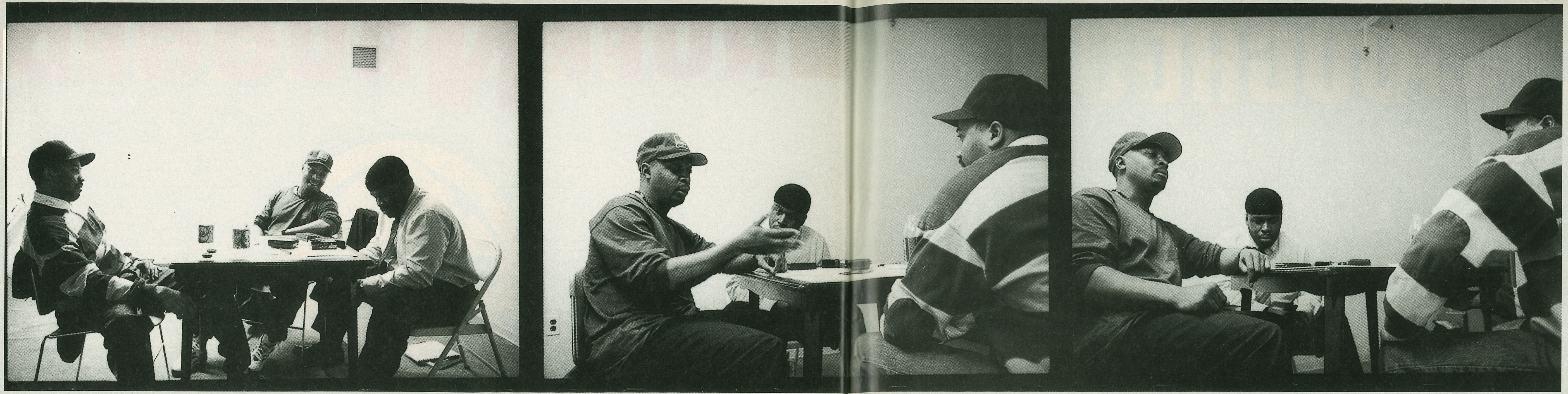

CHUCK D, HARRY ALLEN, REGINALD C. DENNIS (STRIPED SHIRT) AND JAMES BERNARD (NOT PICTURED) TALKED FOR FOUR HOURS

CHI MODU

STANDING TALL

On a sunny late Spring afternoon, Chuck D and Harry Allen, the Hip-Hop Activist and Media Assassin and a member of Public Enemy's offstage operations, met with two Source editors, Reginald C. Dennis and James Bernard, for a freewheeling conversation that lasted four hours. Chuck is a man blessed with the triple threat of a restless imagination, fearsome intelligence and resilent vocal chords, so there were no dull moments. Here are some highlights.

FILLING IN THE CRACKS

Chuck: People say the young today have flipped. "[Young people] have gone mad," they say. "Shit is crazy." Young people will always be young people. Young people ain't never changed. Seven-year-old kids ain't much different than they was thirty years ago. Of course they're learning through media a lot quicker and playing Nintendo and stuff like that. But that learning ability or that learning fertile area was always there.

What's lacking is adults standing up and saying, "Yo, fuck that, I'm over twenty-one. I'm a goddamn man. If I feel right is right [and] wrong is wrong, I'ma step to and try to run my shit. I'ma run my community. I'm gonna run my shit for everybody." It's like in Africa. Africa changed my life. In Africa the theory is "all for one and one for all" like Brand Nubian said. You can't just *say* you're Black. You have to prove you're Black. You just can't be Black on the outside skin. That shit don't mean shit in Africa. Everybody's black [in Africa]. Motherfuckers are blue-black. Blacker than midnight. You gotta go out there and prove your shit 'cause if you're violating, your shit is dead.

There's a lack of adults in this structure. [African American adults] don't have control over our educational curriculums, economic situations and our [law] enforcement situations. We can't make up laws in our own situation. We living in a plantation. So young people are coming up and saying, "Shit, I'm sixteen-years-old and I got as much power now as thirty-two-year-olds 'cause they powerless and posseless, well then fuck it. Fuck them. I'm making up my own rules." And what you have is inner anarchy where the young people make up their own rules.

Harry: It's a situation where young people are filling in the cracks that adults have left wide open. And each generation of cracks get bigger and the atrocities get bigger and adults look at it and say, "What's going on? The youth are out of control."

Chuck: Because it's not an individual family effort [that's needed]. It's a community effort. Something that keeps your ass in check. For example, in Africa, they keep your ass in check. They got control over there. The local economic situation. Local education because people get schooled from the community and, believe me, that law is solid in that community. You violate the shit, that's your ass.

But at the same time [in our situation], no one's coming from the outside to repair the situation [and] adults aren't picking up the slack. I mean it's an insane concept when someone's moms can't walk down the street. Anywhere else in the world motherfuckers say, "No that shit sound crazy." Motherfuckers be bustin' they ass talkin' about, "Excuse me ma'am. I'll help you with your bags." So therefore there's no respect for the old, there's no respect for ourselves.

Harry: Even worse how many men can you find posseed up with young people?

Chuck: True! So young people got unity in numbers therefore they say, "Well fuck them, we got power." Which is really an illusion of power. But Black adults are strictly purely powerless especially in America 'cause we can't [be effective] as individuals. And the only way we can make white America at least bend their back to some of our shit is as a collective unit.

Somebody can say, "I raised my child as an individual." But you can't take control of the community [and] you gonna send that kid to school to get his ass beat every goddamn day by somebody that *ain't* raised. So it's bigger than that individual effort. You gotta raise that entire community and say, "Look, these are the ultimatums." What it is, is hard love. "Yeah so-and-so did a driveby and he shot so-and-so's mom. Yo fuck the motherfuckin' police. We gonna all roll in that motherfucker and chop his hands and legs off. So then he can go back inthe community but at the same time motherfuckers'll see him and won't do that shit again."

SPORTS CARS AND SNEAKER DEALS

Chuck: I learned one thing from the best group of all-time, Run-DMC. I learned from them that you gotta create your own values and don't let motherfuckers create a value system for you, that you don't preconceive yourself. For example, we talked about *Tougher Than Leather* [a dope album that was met with indifference by the hip-hop audience]. You gotta understand that Run-DMC was out a long time in hip-hop, five solid years [when *Tougher Than Leather* came out]. I had momentum only because I'm the new motherfucker. But just because you the new motherfucker don't mean you the best motherfucker. You coming in like Larry Johnson all you want but fuck that—Kareem is *the* motherfucker. You Larry Johnson getting your fuckin' sports cars or sneaker deals or $80 million deals all you want, but Kareem is in the post if he's at the top of his game. Larry Johnson got the attention but Kareem is Kareem. So we the new motherfuckers on the box [back in 1988] and I was feeling bad because motherfuckers were rallying behind the new, talking about, "Yeah Public Enemy, they came with this innovative other shit." Run DMC did a damn good job on *Tougher Than Leather* and at that time what was motherfuckers sayin? They was taking Run-DMC's shit for granted 'cause Run DMC all the time had shits coming out—BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!—one after the other. After awhile we got used to it, like [*swaying like he's punch drunk*] "Oh that's Run, that's Run."

I like to think of myself like Magic Johnson, Ice Cube is like Jordan, you know what I'm sayin'? LL is like Kareem. I got championship rings, so I gotta be [satisfied enough to be] able to say, "Well, at least let's get into the playoffs and then when we get in the playoffs, we gonna do some shit. Just let's get in the playoffs." And we'll get in there with a 47-34 record, but shit is *on* when we in that motherfucker.

TESTING POSITIVE

Chuck: How can you talk about a career when at the end of the day you can't come up with fifteen songs? Imagine you got fifteen hits and they say the same goddamn thing? That don't happen. In rap, which is a diverse music and uses a lot of words, the least we [rappers] could do is build the craft of songwriting in hitting topics. There are a lot of topics that haven't been hit yet. A lot of people talk about gangster rap and negative rap, but life is full of positive and negative energies and every story needs to be told, regardless. It's just not enough balance.

Positive rap hasn't been reinforced in society. "Positive" rap cannot be put next to "negative" rap. [Positive rap] has a place but the place isn't to be battling on the shelf jam-for-jam, cut-for-cut, lyric-for-lyric. It needs reinforcement. If it's positive rap, involve it in the school systems. Kids are sitting in there eight hours a day, right? We have people say how we [rappers] attack this. No! Implicate positive rap in the school systems. Kids are sitting in the schools with an outdated curriculum. A severely outdated curriculum. Remember Lakim Shabazz's video in front of the Pyramids? You can't just throw that shit on *Video Music Box* and expect that shit to go toe-to-toe with some other shit. Black people are attracted to negative where the hate that hate produced taught us to hate ourselves. The positive has to be on a higher plateau where people can get it in a different form.

Therefore, the artist does a positive rap or positive video. He's charged because the school system or the educational system supplements his income which gives him a reason to keep doing what he's doing. They got multi-million dollar budgets in education. They put it towards books today; with technology, it comes in tapes and videos for a lot of Black kids. That multi-billion dollar [education] industry has to pretty much support artistry that brings across education. Therefore, [an artist] comes along and he doesn't feel that he has to dip into the area of going—for lack of a better word—the gangster route to get sales and to make him have a living. If you don't sell no records, you the fuck on out [of the rap game]. But at the same time he [the positive rapper] is in the school system—1st grade, 2nd grade, do a tape, do a video. Then you have half the fuckin' curriculum [filled with the] damn artist making them educational tapes, positive raps and shit. And they're paid, which is the most important. They have a profession doing it.

It's an outdated curriculum and that's crippling the kids. So what's happening is there's no older reinforcement. Black communities are not in charge of it like I said earlier. We can't make educational curriculum changes. We can't make economic changes to support the young and pay the young and show them about businesses. Like in school you could take a business course but are they gonna tell you what type of business to start? Hell fuckin' no. We still on the plantation state. The old ain't fuckin' building the young. So what hapens? You give a 15-year-old person a choice between *Beauty and the Beast* and a fuckin' porno flick. Motherfuckers pickin' that porno flick, holding their dick, like "Ohhh shit!" That's the fuckin' same like putting Snoop Dogg next to Lakim Shabazz, so of course people gonna say, "Damn, well Snoop Dogg is reality." This is what happens when the art reflects certain aspects of reality. Then the art therefore creates reality because it's the only thing getting fuckin' fuel. Negative shit can fuel on itself, positive shit needs reinforcement. It's much harder to sell the plus side of us as a people. It's easier to sell the negative side of us. Very easy. Reg, you could go out pick up a piece—9-13 dollars—go in the store, put a hoody over your head and stick the motherfucker up. Overnight, this afternoon. It's easy to do that shit. That's the reason I came up with my definition of "hard." "Hard" means you're able to buck the odds and that's "hard," 'cause it's hard to do. Give a motherfucker a test and they don't study. What do they say? "Damn, this shit is hard." Right? It's easy to fuckin' fuck up. It's easy to do dumb shit.

FROM THE RCA DOGHOUSE

? HAVE YOU CHECKED OUT...

WU-TANG CLAN
"C.R.E.A.M." #517

VOLUME 10
"PUMP" #232

THA ALKAHOLIKS
"MARY JANE" #236

TOP QUALITY
"WHAT"

NOW PLAYING ON
THE BOX & BET

AND COMING SOON,
LISTEN OUT FOR
SHA'DASIOUS
"U KANT PLAY ME"
THE ALMIGHTY
RSO
"HELLBOUND"
BAS BLASTA
"AIN'T WHATCHA DO"

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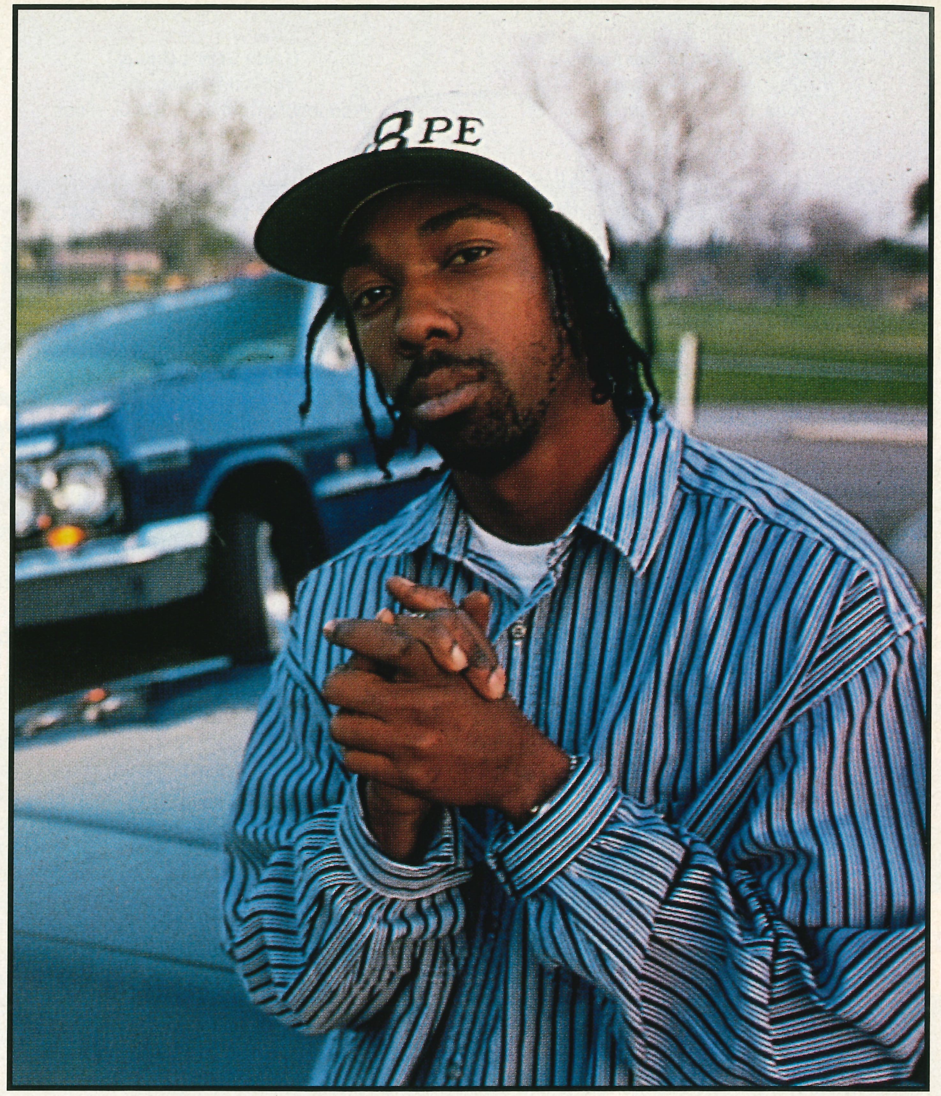
ALBUMS

COMPTON'S MOST WANTED

We Come Strapped
Epic Records
Production: artist, DJ Slip



R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Never before in the history of hip-hop has one word been so difficult to earn. Especially for rappers. No matter how successful they become, at the end of the day one thing remains clear: all of the cash, gold chains, girls and guns in the world mean little without that seven-letter word.

With his fourth album in as many years, MC Eiht of CMW continues to earn his respect from the ground up. A truly underrated rapper, Eiht has shown from day one, that his intensely labored vocal inflections are second to none on the mic. His 1990 debut *It's A Compton Thang* used the musical arrangements of Issac Hayes, Bobby Womack and Barry White to elevate and define the sound of West Coast hip-hop. And despite its poor album sales, laid-back tracks like "One Time Gaffled 'Em Up," "Duc Sik" and "Late Night Hype" became street classics and showcased Eiht's descriptive narration abilities. 1991's *Straight Checkin' Em*, which featured the hit "Growin' Up In The Hood" from the movie *Boyz-N-Tha Hood*, brought him to the attention of a nationwide audience. And by the time 1992's *Music To Drive By* was released, Eiht was becoming respected as a true player in the game. Brothers from Compton to Brooklyn knew his trademark "geyeah" by heart. But it wasn't until his featured role in *Menace II Society* and his nationwide hit ("Straight Up Menace") off the soundtrack that the eyes of the nation finally opened and recognized MC Eiht as a legitimate star.

Now, as he stands on the edge that separates the hip-hop legends from the niggas who just rapped for awhile, MC Eiht unleashes his masterpiece. Simply put, *We Come Strapped* is the mutherfuckin' bomb. There have been a lot of good albums (or albums with good songs) that kick the reality (formerly "gangsta") shit, but few have been able to match the impression that groups like N.W.A, the Geto Boys, Too Short and Dr. Dre left during the peak of their creativity and relevance.

On *We Come Strapped*, the production on every track is orchestrated to perfection. DJ Slip comes way too tight, making music and not just beats. In a day when everyone's music sounds the same, Slip makes sure each track has a personality of its own. Pianos, guitars, synthesizers, flutes and drum beats, it all comes through crisp and clear—a fitting soundtrack for our times.

And while it is understood that Compton isn't the Mecca of West Coast hip-hop that it once was, one thing is clear from the start of the first track: MC Eiht is straight representing the CPT. And as "Def Wish III" proves, he has not gotten too large to give his longtime nemesis, DJ Quik, a pass. "You better think fast 'cause you ain't too quick to get wit'/You just another punk-ass bitch talkin' bullshit/It's time to vamp/Lick my nuts like a stamp/Before your ass breaks camp, you'll get fucked like a tramp named David/They used to call you 'Silly Billy'/Mark-ass nigga gets rolled like a Phillie/And you don't want to see me/DJ Quik in a khaki bikini."

He also takes care of business G-style on tracks like "Take 2 Wit' Me" and "Puts In Much Work," in which his homies Boom Bam and MC Chill from the crew called Niggas On The Run get a little burn (for those who don't remember, MC Chill was one of the rappers featured on the original CMW joint). But the most surprising cut by far would have to be the unholy trinity made up of Eiht, Spice 1 and, dig this, Redman. Despite the odd line up, they come off like gangbusters on "Nuthin' But The Gangsta." It's definitely some ill shit, a hip-hop Bermuda Triangle that stretches from Oakland to Newark and back home to Compton. Finally, on the album's best cut, "Hard Times," Eiht gives a memorable performance that proves once and for all that his time has come. "You can't fuck wit' it fool so don't say nothin'/Niggas I'm stompin' so I'll keep dumpin'/Don't try to fuck with the Eiht-Ball as I chop-chop, timber and watch that ass fall/So, is that it nigga?/I don't think you want no more/New and improved like Madden '94."

This is the hardcore player shit that you have been waiting for. While hip-hop moralists like C. Delores Tucker, Rev. Calvin Butts, Dionne Warwick and Tim Dog might see this as just another "gangsta" album packed with guns, violence, drugs and misogyny, those of us who know what's up will be able to appreciate its artistic value. And as more and more washed up hardcore rappers continue to trade in their guns for Janet Jackson concert tickets, Eiht will at long last have the perfect opportunity to trade in his steel for platinum.

ALLEN S. GORDON 'THA EBONY CAT'

5 a hip-hop classic **4** slammin'—definite satisfaction **3** good, worth checking out **2** needs help **1** totally wack

JERU THE DAMAJA

The Sun Rises In The East

Payday/FFRR Records
Production: DJ Premier

It's evident, even to idiots, that this thing called hip-hop has been afflicted by a flood of mediocrity disguised in Karl Kani jean-suits, accessorized with cellulars and Saturday Night Specials. As a result, cynicism has strained the acceptance of happy-go-lucky formulas that worked for artists (i.e. chronic rhymes and cartoonish delivery gimmicks) just six months ago. But as the hip-hop stakes have been raised to demand more pure rhymes and rhythms, Jeru The Damaja has stepped up to the challenge, his long-awaited debut with him.

A long-time member of the GangStarr crew, D. Original Dirty Rotten Scoundrel has rhymed on cuts such as "I'm The Man" and, most recently, "Speak Ya Clout." But the real truth came with the evolution of Jeru's first solo single, "Come Clean," from underground secret to bonafide hip-hop classic. A testament to his talent, Jeru balanced "mass appeal," respectability and longevity, without compromising shit.

While his name isn't on the front cover, producer DJ Premier is as essential to this album as Jeru himself. Primo is already a legend in the beat field for his tracks with GangStarr, Mobb Deep, Nas, etc., but with Jeru he goes further against the grain with a collection of simple but dense beats. He uses flutes, harmonic discord, bugged-out sound effects, even static to fill in his compositions. The music is more abstract than anything you'd hear on his GangStarr records, but the gamble works. Throughout the album, you remain mesmerized while Primo cuts and scratches like a spit-out razor.

As for Jeru, the music both contrasts and compliments his disjointed flow and deep poetical lyricism. Like a portrait in rebellion, Jeru is frighteningly nonchalant with his punch lines and philosophizing. All of the tracks are ill, but the stand-outs include "D. Original," "Come Clean" and "Da Bitchez." The masterful metaphors of "Can't Stop The Prophet" have Jeru (in the guise of a superhero) chasing the personification of Ignorance, as his agents: Deceit, Anger, Despair and Animosity conspire to destroy him by cutting off his dreds and poisoning him with pork chop venom.

But the most powerful cut on the album is "Ain't The Devil Happy." Primo combines violins (!) with kick drums and an evil laughter hook that sounds like it was sampled in hell. And Jeru drops masterpieces in poetry: "As devils search for the secrets to immortality/I alter my physical chemistry/Mock the Valley of the Shadow of Death/I exist even when no things are left/Vibrations transcend space and time/Pure at heart because I deal with the mind/That's why I compose these verses/Brought over worlds/My words are now universes/Written on these pages is the ageless/Wisdom of the sages/Ignorance is contagious."

While only 10 full cuts, *The Sun Rises In The East* is short but well worth the money for those who think they can handle Jeru's mindspray. This is not happy music, there is no G-funk involved, and you must pay attention.

SHORTIE

ABOVE THE LAW

Uncle Sam's Curse

Ruthless/Relativity
Production: Cold 187, KM.G, K-oss

"The word for today is paper," says the female radio announcer at the conclusion of "Concrete Jungle." "If you ain't got none, you better get some, and if you don't know how to get it, you better learn."

Dropping fat-ass money-making tracks is something Cold 187um was born to do. Sure, the *Black Mafia Life* EP was rather lackluster in comparison to the group's Dr. Dre co-produced *Living Like Hustlers* debut, but Above The Law's latest puts the man who added the LAPD's police murder code to rap's lexicon long before Snoop, back near the top of his game. The slow rolling funkers he compiles for his fourth effort ooze along with a smoothness that extends G-funk to even higher creative levels, proving that he had just as much to do with *Hustlers* success as Dre did. With *Uncle Sam's Curse*, however, ATL prove that they too can make a li'l noise in a gangsta rap scene currently dominated by the Long Beach sound.

"Return Of The Real Shit," "Set Free" and "Kalifornia" make up a triumvirate of West Coast hip-hop perfection. The sticky sweet funk melodies just float around your ears—close your eyes and it feels like your chair is moving. Gangsta themes are by and large tired, but Cold 187um and KM.G's slick, sly and wicked styles, when matched with these beats, enable the listener to tolerate the predictable in an enjoyable fashion. "Real Shit" comes slow and low, a fat combination of "Funky Worm" synth riffs and a smidgen of "More Bounce" for added pep. Granted, it sounds conventional, but then again, like a favorite soft drink, sometimes things are better that way. "Set Free" shifts the ride into second with some "Pride And Vanity" smooth thump and a P-Funk/Slim Galliard style scat chorus that says these niggas can flex some variety when it's time to show and prove.

"Kalifornia," however, really sets the party off. This double barreled shotgun blast of a track encapsulates everything distinct about California-based rap, in KM.G's words: "palm trees, lowriders, movie stars" and murder narratives. The first two minutes slink along with good-day sunshine laid-back thump music but them flips over for some hellafied gangsta shit. If the rest of the album could maintain this level of excellence, one ponders while listening to the last two minutes of this track, *The Chronic* might have had some serious competition.

But alas, no. While a few more tracks stand out, none of the rest quite duplicate the intensity of the first three. Only "Everything Will Be Alright," "Who Ryde" and "Gangsta Madness" escape the descending cycle. Tone Loc shows surprising promise in his "Who Ryde" cameo, but the masses might not be ready to accept the harder persona he reflects here after the crossover success of his last two albums. "Gangsta Madness" sews everything up with Tony Toni Toné-influenced acoustic guitars, Jamaica funkin' bass, "Summer Madness"-like organ accents, and lyrics that reflect the futility of meaningful life in the gangsta lifestyle.

Uncle Sam's Curse is a solid demonstration of what Above The Law is all about. Let's just hope they continue to come to the table with more jams like "Kalifornia" as opposed to "Rain Be For Rain Bo" and continue their exploration of what could be a fierce political consciousness. G'z and hustlers from all walks of the rap game could learn from their example.

CHEO H. COKER

CELLY CEL

Heat 4 Yo Ass

Sik Wid It
Production: Studio Ton

I'm listening to the new Celly Cel tape and I'm wondering why all the music today sounds alike. Everybody's got a James Brown sample, a P-funk sample, a Zapp sample and a "Funky Worm." Everybody's got a Glock, a Phillie and a 40. Everybody's chopping lyrics. Everybody's the roughest gangster, the dopest MC and the miggity-miggity-mack. But if they're the best, what does that make everybody else?

Anyway, what about this Celly Cel tape? Who does he sound like? Everybody? No, definitely not. It's West Coast but it's not like Dre or the Pharcyde. It's all funk. On the title track, it's simple and rough, with fat drums from "Cutie Pie," and "Bodyshop" is smooth with a Carl Carlton bassline that hits just as hard. The album's best tracks—"Gin Wit' No Juice," which is simple but funky, "Funk 4 Life" and "Hot Sunny Day"—are rugged and melodic at the same time. It's like dirty soul with straight attitude. True hip-hop funk. Real music with fat beats. You can ride to it, but the drums hit way too hard for it to be some LA shit. See, Cel comes from the Bay. No, not like Too Short and them. Vallejo, you know, the North Bay.

The raps? They're gangster scenarios rather than cut-and-dried stories—little tales with street messages and plenty of bitch rhymes. His flow? It's kind of like Spice 1's but only not as aggressive, more like Ray Luv. Cel is equal parts player and gangsta, harder than Ray but not as homicidal as Spice. He's down with E-40 from the Click and it sounds like they have the same producers, but Cel's tracks have more guitars and beats and aren't as smooth as the Click's. E-40 raps on the album and so does another member of the Click, B-Legit Tha Savage. It's a V-Town thing.

But what does Cel really talk about on the album? The usual: sex, money, murder, grinding, calling out hos, dissing player-haters, balling, and everything else that young men talk about. But somehow with Cel it's different, it's not excessive or shocking, it's sort of matter-of-fact. It's as if you are just rolling in a car with him as he tells you what goes on. It's not positive or uplifting, but then again this is not reality. It's just a fantasy. Just sit back, bump your head and ride—sideways to the liquor store.

JOSH LEVINE

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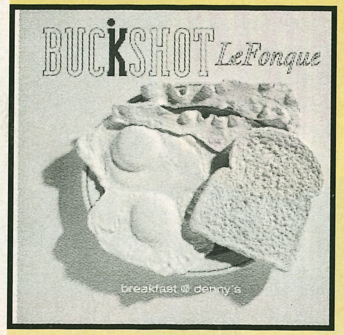


BRANFORD MARSALIS & DJ PREMIER

Buckshot LeFonque

Columbia

Building off a collaboration that began on "Mo Better Blues," DJ Premier and Branford Marsalis have combined talents to produce an album that, for a few cuts at least, couples the free-flowing instrumentation of jazz with the head-snapping rhythms of hip-hop. Both Marsalis and Premier are masters of their craft, and like Guru's *Jazzamatazz*, this record serves to enforce the natural relationship between these two renegade art forms.

Unlike *Jazzamatazz*, however, much of this album is pure instrumental, which is a good thing since none of the vocal performances on the record would catch the attention of hip-hop heads. But when the bumping beat of "Buckshot Intro" hits your speakers, and Premier starts skillfully scratching the word "Buckshot," you realize that this collaboration can work.

The record is at its best when it emulates the once-popular notion of "DJ cuts"—songs such as Jazzy Jeff's "A Touch Of Jazz" or EPMD's "K La Boss" that feature a bumping track and scratched phrases from records. With his ample cutting skills, DJ Premier constructs an impressive sample/scratch collage on "Some Shit at 78 BPM," but with extra flavor since Marsalis's sweet alto sax accompanies the slicing. The first single, "Breakfast At Denny's"—based on the recent racial incident at the restaurant—also boasts incredible scratching, a thumping groove and a warm sax that repeats a fly melody.

Elsewhere, Maya Angelou recites her work on "Caged Bird" and Showbiz contributes some production skills on "Hotter Than Hot." The majority of the album is more for jazz heads, with Roy Hargrove's trumpet teaming up with Branford on many of the cuts. At its best, though, the instant fatness of a Premier track combined with the seasoned greatness of Marsalis, make this album worth a listen.

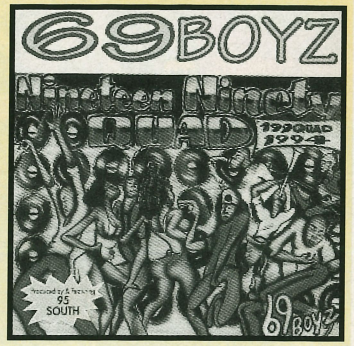
JOE SHOOTER

69 BOYZ

199Quad

Rip It Records

Production: artist, CC Lemonhead, 95 South



This album can be looked at as the final addition to a bass trilogy. Since the 69 Boyz, 95 South and CC Lemonhead all hang and work together, their albums were bound to share more than a few similarities. But while 95 South put more emphasis on booty shakin', and CC concentrated on heavy doses of quad, the 69 Boyz have made a name for themselves by concentrating on their vocals. That's not to say that you won't find tracks to make you shake your ass or put your 15"'s to the test—because you will—but if you want bass music with quality rapping, then the Boyz can give it to you.

Over fast-paced tracks, Thrill and Rotweiler relax their flow and drift across their songs with a smoothness that is a rarity in bass music. The rhymes aren't complex but the fact that they are not rushing their lyrics (as most bass lyricists are inclined to do) is refreshing and satisfying. There is also the added bonus of a mixture of hip-hop and bass that gives the album added variety. The opening track, "Land 69," has the crew rapping over a bass enhanced version of Run-DMC's legendary "Peter Piper" instrumental. And "Hennessy" is nothing less than a hilarious alcohol-impaired parody of the popular Arrested Development tune. But whether you are fiending for a rapid "Booty Drop" or a straight up B-boy cruise down "Da Set" these Boyz can offer it all. **J-MILL**

THE PUPPIES

The Puppies

Chaos/Columbia

Production: Calvin & Carlton Mills

This record is unusual for two reasons. First is a Miami bass album being released on a major label. Second, it's a bass album performed by kids (Big Boy, age 9, and his sister Tamara, age 13). For those not into bass, this might seem like two reasons for you not to buy this album, but please, bear with me. While this might not be the beverage of choice for many hip-hop enthusiasts, those of you who have children of your own or are in close contact with kids (we're talking pre-teen and younger here) might find that this album just might be the thing to keep them entertained for the duration of the summer.

Songs like "Summer Delight" and "Puppy Love" are definitely aimed towards the playground set with their simple lyrics and hooks, but the album also has its share of traditional uptempo bass tracks. "Funky Y-2-C" has already become a favorite of bassheads of all ages. And Miami's #1 DJ, Uncle Al, makes a few appearances on songs like "Strap Down," which should probably be played after the little ones have gone to bed. But when you want to talk about an innovation whose time has come, go no further than the "Number Game Bass Check." This track teaches kids how to count to ten over a series of ascending and descending 808 tones. It hits hard enough for the most demanding car stereo enthusiast, but I doubt if you'll be hearing this one on "Sesame Street." **J-MILL**

THE PUPPIES
FUNKY Y•2•C

UNITED FUTURE ORGANIZATION

United Future Organization

Verve/Talkin' Loud

The fusion of jazz and hip-hop has come full circle with recent releases from two of America's most respected jazz establishments. First there was US3, a group which liberally sampled from the hallowed vaults of its label, Blue Note. Now Verve's entry into the jazz-hop sweepstakes comes in the form of a Japanese production crew who are all that jazz, and then some.

To a smooth, flowing potion of breakbeats, heady loops and live playing, they add a distinctly international flavor which helps to put their own spin on acid jazz. Nice touches like the Gypsy guitar on "Upa Neguinho" or the Middle Eastern intro of "I'll Bet You Thought I'd Never Find You" take you into the dark, smoky confines of a Moroccan Coffee House, and if that isn't beatnik enough, they even sample Jack Kerouac on "Poetry And All That Jazz." While other vocalists and vocal styles—none of them rap—are put to good use, it's the raw, spontaneous feel of these mostly instrumental tracks which sells this one. And make no mistake about it, this joint was made in Japan. **S.H. FERNANDO JR.**

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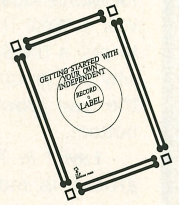
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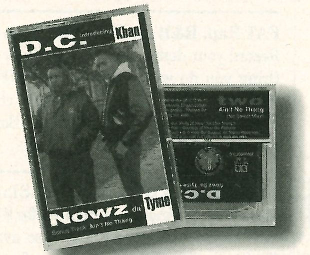

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LIGHTER SHADE OF BROWN

Layin' In The Cut
Mercury Records
Production: artist, Stoker, Jammin' James Carter, Romeo, DTTX, Kenny Dope

A Lighter Shade Of Brown (Robert Gutierrez & Bobby Ramirez) are the Jazzy Jeff and Fresh Prince of Chicano rap—and that's not meant as a dis. If you're looking for a record chock-full of fiendish tales of vatos locos cruising the wide streets of East LA in lowered ranflas, cohetes at their sides, while looking for that busta-ass puto they feel needs to get smoked, this is not the group for you. LSOB would rather bring music for the barbecue, maybe throw some bones, go to a car show or just cruise around looking for some rucas with fat culos while blasting War's “Spill The Wine.” Sometimes it's good to get a break from all the drama, which is why this group has always been able to rock the ever growing Aztlan Nation from top to bottom.

Layin' In The Cut is a record where the groove is more important than anything that's being said on the mic. It's Old School in that electro-funk sense: party rhymes, sing-song choruses and simplistic bass jams that are dance floor and radio-friendly. And like any record that falls into this category, some songs are the summertime bomb, while others are better left un-mentioned.

“Doin' The Same Thing” kicks things off on a smooth note, bumpin' like an oldie snatched off of one of those popular *East Side Story* complilation LPs. “Where Ya At?” and “If You Wanna Groove” fall into the radio bullshit category, but “Hey DJ,” thankfully, comes to the rescue. Old School heads might cringe when comparing this version to the World Famous Supreme Team original, but there are enough snippets from that classic, matched by hearty breakbeats to induce those way “back in the day” flashbacks. But “Talk 'Bout (Gettin' It On)” is what really solidifies the first side of the album. Think Domino with a Latin twist coupled with a Marvin Gaye chorus variation and some tongue-in-cheek sexual references and you get the picture.

“Everyday All Day” and “Things Ain't The Same,” funky music aside, are worth a mention just because A Lighter Shade Of Brown talk about something of substance. For once the group paints a scenario that isn't about diggin' out a girl or how well they rock a party, but instead how hard it is to maintain in a world that keeps getting crazier. “Things,” pound-for-pound, is the best song on the album, the perfect combination of agile lyrical flow and profound thump, proving that they don't always have to depend on remaking a jam by Cameo or Kool & The Gang to get their point across. Of any of the aforementioned tracks, this is the single with enough power to earn the group more fans outside the Chicano community.

Lighter Shade Of Brown are light-hearted, not light-weights. They might not be “hard,” but they do know how to please their audience, which has grown steadily since the early '90s. But above all, LSOB prove that it is still possible to make a record without profanity or violence that isn't completely corny. When it really comes down to it, hip-hop music has always been about feeling. And as long as the tracks are on point *Layin' In The Cut* is “bien firme.” **CHEO H. COKER**

BIG MIKE

Something Serious
Rap-A-Lot
Production: artist, N.O. Joe, Pee Wee, Bido 1, Mike Dean, Crazy C, Michael Banks, Pimp C

Does anyone remember a group called the Convicts? And if so, isn't it strange that Louisiana's Big Mike didn't make more of a splash on hip-hop when he debuted with that Houston-based crew three years ago? Most people, no doubt, recognize Mike as the newest member of the Geto Boys. The one who breathed new life into the group after Willie D decided to step. With his introductory appearance with the GBs, Mike shocked a lot of people with his rugged, laid-back flow that seemed to drop out of nowhere. Hell, he very nearly pulled the rug out from under Scarface. But as a solo artist Mike was still untested. As a Geto Boy, he only had to carry about one dope verse per song. Surely he couldn't sustain that type of pace for an entire album, right? Wrong!

With *Something Serious*, Mike stands to once again shock the masses. He has managed to put together a complete lyrical package that far exceeds his previous work and definitely places him within striking range of Mr. Scarface. The secret of his success? A solid selection of diversity that has Mike rocking over more than the typical slow, hardcore tracks that Houston has become known for. On songs like “Coming From The Swamp” and the title track, Mike kicks freestyle lyrics in a unique gangsta style over funky and relatively uptempo tracks. “It's a muthafuckin' murda/When ya heard of a/Nigga like me/On a flowin' spree/Fuckin' up sons a bitches mentally/Get the spoon ready, 'cause mama got the soup on/Shoppin' for bodies and I ain't even got a coupon.” Mike's reliance on his authentic MC skills coupled with his 100% live instruments, synthesized melodies and choruses create a lively Old School feeling.

With the album's more serious moments, “World of Mine' and “Ghetto Love,” Mike proves to be a master at manipulating moods. These songs describe street scenarios without ever glorifying and glamorizing their negative aspects. And in doing so he proves that you don't have to be heartless to be hard. Rounding out the album is a series of slow, hard driving tracks made to creep to. The roughest of them, “Having Things,” will no doubt get the adrenaline going with its elongated bassline and the whiny flow of its Ohio Players-like chorus.

For you Convicts fans, one cut (“Fire”) features a reunion with Mike and his former partner 3-2 (now currently with the Blac Monks). After hearing this, you really have to wonder why that group never really caught on. And on “Daddy's Gone,” Mr. Scarface drops by to pay homage to all of the single mothers out there who are doing the right thing and raising their children correctly. The last track is a posse cut that closes the album in a explosive fashion. A fitting end to a well-developed and well-paced album by an artist who only seems to get better with time. **J-MILL**

SIR MIX-A-LOT

Chief Boot Knocka
American Records
Production: artist

With his fourth release, Seattle's #1 “Chief Boot Knocka” does little to change his blueprint for platinum success. And why should he? It's been workin' since 1986 and it has yet to show signs of age. Yep, while his critics riff, Mix continues to check his bank. But if anything has changed this time, out it's his delivery, which seems to become more refined with each new release. Mix's unique cadence still emphasizes the final word of every line, but his timing seems to have improved just enough to show us that he is not so content with success that he will rest on his wallet and slack off on his skills between albums.

Once again Mix's detailed lyrics give almost every cut an interesting story to follow. Whether it's a tale about his tax dealings with the IRS (“Take My Stash”) or his description of the female mack game (“Brown Shuga”), Mix manages to grab your attention and keep you occupied for an entire song, making you forget about the weird sounds that he is always experimenting with in the background.

The quirky, one-of-a-kind electronic nature of Mix's futuristic beats continue to flourish on this album. And once again, Mix proves that he is the only person in the world who can come off with this type of music. He fills his niche by creating a musical blend that is neither hardcore nor commercial but contains elements of both. As usual, his arsenal ranges from uptempo “Baby Got Back”-type joints (“DBL The Pressure” & “Put 'Em On The Glass”) to a surprising ballad-like track (“Crusin'”). Either way, Mix-A-Lot fans won't be disappointed at all, and those of you who are tired of the same old run-of-the-mill beats and rhymes may be entertained as well. However, those who haven't been down with Mix in the past probably won't find anything on this album to change their opinion of him. **J-MILL**

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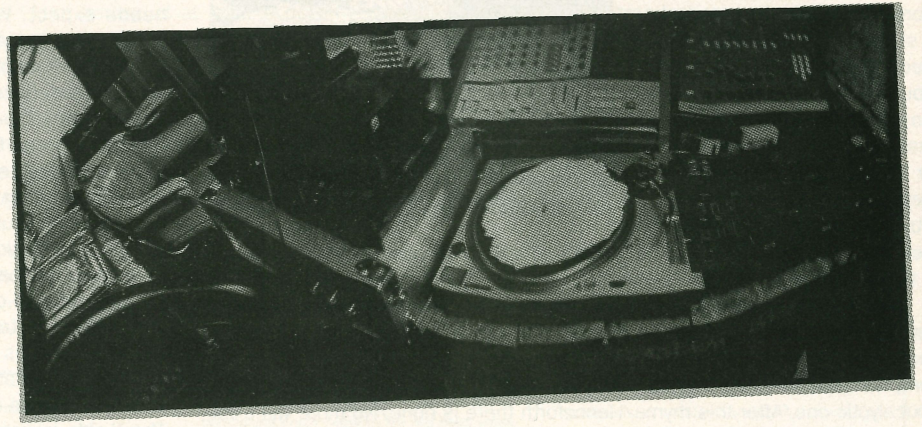

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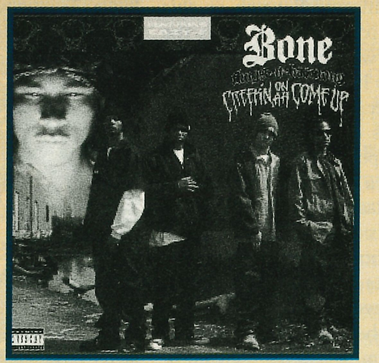
Bone Thugs 'N Harmony



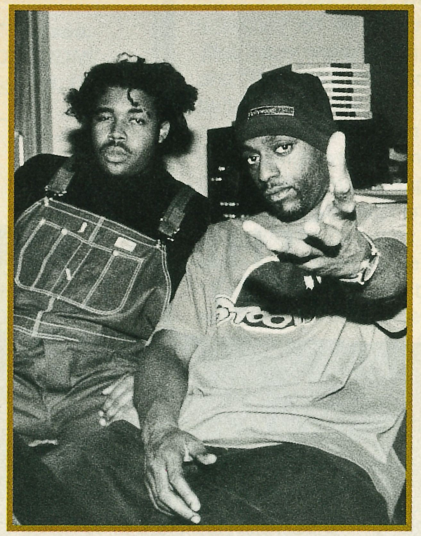
"Thuggish Ruggish Bone"
Ruthless/Relativity
Production: DJ Uneek

It doesn't get much nicer than this first single from Bone Thugs 'N Harmony, six ruff and rugged heads from Cleveland, Ohio, whose rhyme styles fall somewhere between Warren G, Boss and Smif 'N Wessun. If there is such a "somewhere." The point is that they come original, spitting out their gangsterish lyrics with the kind of complex phrasing and shifting cadences you'd expect from a ghetto opera singer with a hoarse throat.

Opening with a Calvin Butts speech ("We're not against rap, we're not against rappers, but we are against those thugs"), this track draws a line in the urban sand. Armed with all the usual totems of "realness"—guns, blunts, forties and so on—the five members of Bone blast at busters and hypocrites of every kind. Shit doesn't get much deeper than "Gotta give it up to the Glock, Glock" or "Try to creep, you get beat/Maybe six feet. . ." but it's the sounds that tell the story here.

The clicking chime (from Junior's classic "Mama Used To Say") that opens the cut, the seething synthesizer and bubbling bassline that drive the head-noddin' beat all create a foreboding but funky atmosphere. When a young woman begins singing over and over in the pauses ("It's the thuggish ruggish bone"), the cut takes on a dreamy quality. Against the dipping and diving, do-or-die vocals of the thugsters, she sounds affectionate and mournful at the same time—like she's floating above the urban wasteland they've conjured, unable to do anything but announce their devolution from skin to bone.

Organized Konfusion



"Stress"
Hollywood Basic
Production: artist, Large Professor

It just may be that all geniuses are destined to be misunderstood, but even still, this group of lyrical masterminds have gotten more than their deserved share of stress. After one underappreciated album and years of underground critical acclaim, Pharaoh Monch and Prince Poetry are finally back to take a few swings for the recognition and success they deserve. But until their new album drops, fans can settle their cravings with "Stress," the group's artistic response to the tribulations of the rap game.

The original version surrounds the brain with eerie synth slides, discordant trumpet blasts and dense drums. You find yourself tensing up as the chorus seethes, "Crush/Kill/Destroy/Stress." And then Monch concocts his complex molecular compounds with lyrics like, "You will now consider me the apocalyptic one/After this rhyme/Henceforth there is none/No more will exist when I emerge from the mist in which I was born into/Scorned. . ./My perception of poetical injection is ejaculation/The Immaculate Conception. . ."

But the bonafide bomb is the Extra P remix which features a body-rock bounce beat, with all new lyrics from Monch, Prince and the mad scientist himself, Large Professor. This track's centrifugal force will pull you in, alerting you to the fact that the time has finally come for Organized Konfusion to walk into the sun.

Gravediggaz

"Diary Of A Mad Man" b/w
"Constant Elevation"
Gee Street
Production: Prince Paul, RNS

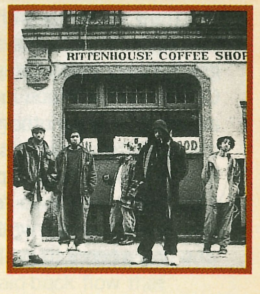
"Out of the darkness, out of the mist of the deep comes the Gravediggaz." The twisted brainchild of producer Prince Paul (the Undertaker), Poetic (the Grym Reaper), Fruitkwan (the Gatekeeper) and Wu-Tang's Prince Rakeem (RZA the Ryzarector), the Gravediggaz have created an audio horror flick that holds its own with the likes of *The Shining* and *The Exorcist*.

It may seem like a gimmick, but the macabre concept works. Maybe it's the Undertaker's ridiculously ill beats. On "Diary Of A Madman" he lays ghostly wails over an earthquake bassline. On "Constant Elevation" he pairs a lighthearted piano roll with a bumping bassline.

Or maybe it's the beautifully sick rhymes. While ultraviolence is hip-hop's latest bandwagon, few "hardcore gangstas" can claim lyrics like guest rapper, Scientific Shabazz's: "Bear witness, as I exercise my exorcism/The evil that lurks within the sin/The terrorism/Possessed by evil spirits/Voices from the dead/I come forth with Gravediggaz and a head fulla dread/I've been examined since I was semen/They took a sonogram and seen the image of a demon."

From Poetic's strung-out quiver, to Fruitkwan's dusted creep, to the RZA's Shaolin drawl ("I'll take my Glock and I'll splattah/Shattah/Three stages of your mattah/Return your aaass back to a gaaass/In a flaaash"), the Gravediggaz go beyond gore to provide fat tracks that will rock padded cells and straight jackets from coast-to-coast. And if you think the single stretches the limits of depravity, just wait 'til you hear the album, *6 Feet Deep*. Until then, lock your doors and hide the children.

THE ROOTS



"Distortion To Static"/ "The Lesson Part 1"
Geffen Records
Production: B.R.O.THER.?, Kelo and AJ Shine

With all the talk about live instruments in hip-hop, there has yet to be a group that truly captures the gritty excitement of real rap using live players. Too often, "unplugged" rap sounds too wimpy and too disconnected from the dirty, mechanical funk we hip-hop heads expect. Well, hold down your samplers, because a crew from Philadelphia is tryin' to change all that. Make way for The Roots.

Sporting a four-piece band, a funky drummer and two skilled MCs, The Roots are definitely on some next shit. Their sensibility and approach is based in true hip-hop, so on a certain level their sound is the same as any good rap group. But since the drums, bass and moody keys are live, the familiar hip-hop terrain is charged with a mellow funk energy.

The A-side brings a head-snappin' beat punctuated by sharp drum blasts, with the slow-but-strong pacing of a Black Moon or Crooklyn Dodgers. Behind the music, the sound of record static is laid, and sometimes the beat drops so that lyrics are dropped on top of that friction. Lead MC Black Thought weaves complex rhymes around the track, making the flow sound like a rat-tat-tat-tat of rhyming syllables. The subject matter is abstract, but the word choices are intelligent. They're the kind of rhymes thick with double-meanings that take more than a few listens to fully decipher. MC Malik B makes only an intentionally brief, funny appearance on this cut.

The B-side is some other back-to-the-basics shit with strictly verbal percussion—courtesy Rahzell the Godfather Of Noise and B.R.O.THER. ?—providing the only music on the track. A 15-year-old Philly MC named Dice Raw provides lyrical assistance on "The Lesson."

It appears that in one swoop, The Roots have accomplished two difficult tasks: putting Philadelphia back on the hip-hop map and creating an "alternative" take on rap that's really worth a listen.

CONT. FROM PAGE 66

Milian-Rodriguez. "He'd go to the Senate chambers and sit around and try to look erudite. It was such a great joke. We all laughed about it."

Asked why Escobar was so much better than the other drug barons, Milian-Rodriguez says, "He was the bravest, the most daring, he was the first to make the move from marijuana to cocaine, and he had that little bit of genius which told him he had to recruit professionals. That's what set him apart." But, the money launderer adds, "he became a prisoner of his success and his limitations. Pablo had no intellectual depth. I pitied him more than I liked him. He was so out of his depth."

Milian-Rodriguez continues, "He was a man of extremes. He could be very magnanimous. He would give you the shirt off his back. If you shined his shoes and you did a wonderful job, he'd look at you and remember that he used to shine shoes and he'd give you $100. On the other hand, if he got a little mad at you, you were dead. He was always violent, always had a lot of guns around."

It was this violence which was Escobar's undoing. For a decade, the Medellin cartel declared war on its adversaries, carrying out assassinations of an Attorney General, a Justice Minister, three presidential candidates, 30 kidnap victims, scores of journalists, over 200 judges and some 1,000 policemen. Many civilians died as well. In 1989, Escobar's agents planted a bomb aboard an Avianca airplane, killing all 107 passengers.

"When Pablo decided to become a terrorist, I felt he had signed his death warrant," Milian-Rodriguez recalls. "You can be a Robin Hood and you can survive. You can bribe anyone you want, and survive. But you cannot kill anyone you want. There was no one with this disposition to sit with him and discuss the implications of terrorism. No one gave him five moves ahead. Nobody ever told him about escalation, tit for tat."

Asked if he was stunned by Escobar's death, Milian-Rodriguez says, "I thought he was a dead man for many years. I'm surprised he was able to last as long as he did. In the end," he adds, "competitors did not protect him. He had so many enemies everywhere that the Colombian government was able to put together a hunting party where everyone had a vested interest in killing him."

The hunting party was headed by a specially created 1,500-man unit, the Search Bloc for Pablo Escobar. This combined military and police force was partially financed, trained and equipped by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and other US and European police and intelligence agencies. They were aided as well by "Los Pepes" (which stands for "Persecuted by Pablo Escobar"), a vigilante group assembled by the Cali cartel and relatives of Escobar's victims. Los Pepes systematically targeted Escobar's family and loyal followers.

The manhunt had begun in July 1992 after Escobar and a group of his followers had walked out of a their mountaintop luxury prison in Envigado. A year earlier, Escobar had carefully negotiated with the government the terms of his confinement, including a reduced sentence and guarantees he would never be extradited to the US. His state-of-the-art prison compound, dubbed "Hotel Escobar" by the press, was equipped with a jacuzzi, king-size bed, computers, giant video screens, high-tech radio communication devices and machine guns. Neither the police nor the army were allowed to enter. Meanwhile, prostitutes, business associates and lawyers freely came and went, servicing the drug lord's needs.

> **"He was the bravest, the most daring, he was the first to make the move from marijuana to cocaine, and he had that little bit of genius which told him he had to recruit professionals. That's what set him apart."**

During the year that Escobar was in prison, the bullet-ridden bodies of at least a dozen associates were found dumped on the edge of Envigado. Rumors had it that they had each been tortured and killed by Escobar because he suspected them of betrayal. Embarassed by such reports, the Colombian government prepared to move Escobar to a real maximum security facility in Bogota. Escobar decided to walk. He and nine fellow prisoners somehow slipped past 500 soldiers who had encircled the prison in preparation for the emergency transfer. When the escape became publicly known, the red-faced Colombian government quickly set up the special Search Bloc, which, over the next year, arrested thousands of suspected Escobar collaborators, thereby effectively crippling the Medellin cartel.

Escobar used various disguises and ingenius hide-outs to defy the dragnet. He dressed as a woman or as a corpse laid out in a coffin and hid behind sliding doors that opened with the turn of a bathroom faucet. "He was like a deer. He could disappear into the hills," commented a DEA agent involved in tracking the drug kingpin. Four times traps were laid, and each time Escobar managed to slip away. Once he left behind two briefcases containing a change of clothes and letters from his son and daughter. There was also a letter Escobar had written his mother saying he wanted to turn himself in but he doubted the government would once again accept his surrender offer. The colonel heading the Search Bloc concurred: he publicly announced his preference for taking Escobar dead rather than alive.

Life on the lam began wearing Escobar down. The DEA estimates that by 1993 his share of Colombia's cocaine trade had plummeted to under 20 percent of the US market and *Forbes* dropped estimates of his personal wealth to a mere $1 billion. In the end, the drug lord grew desperate and sloppy, weary and unwell. He had just turned 44, he had become potbellied and he suffered from ulcers. His brother-in-law, his children's teacher and his loyal food taster and scout, Angelito, had all recently been gunned down. A rocket-grenade had hit the supposedly secret building in Bogota where his family was being kept under government protection. Worried about their safety, Escobar placed a call. His wife wished him a happy birthday and told him to watch himself. Using US-supplied scanning equipment, police traced the call and tracked Escobar's location to a Medellin suburb. Ninety minutes later, a 17-man SWAT team burst into his two-story hide-out. When the machine gun fire stopped, Escobar lay dead, seven bullets in his head and neck.

Milian-Rodriguez says that "the day he died, there were hundreds of instant millionaires. People who had just kept his assets. So his large operation became perhaps a hundred small ones." The DEA predicted the remnants of Escobar's Medellin cartel would merge with the rival Cali cartel which had already snatched up about 80 percent of Colombia's cocaine market. The Cali cartel is, Milian-Rodriguez says, a "cut above"—less violent, lower profile and more commercially sophisticated than Escobar's operation. The Cali cartel prefers bribes and high-tech intelligence gathering to direct confrontation with the government. Eliminating Escobar helped curb cartel-connected killings, but it's done nothing to stop the flow of cocaine. According to a DEA official, "The bottom line is that the cocaine business is bigger than ever."

MH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE [illegible]

her back. The paper is later picketed by the Committee to Eliminate Media Offensive to African People.

February 27, 1994:
A DC court refuses to give long prison sentences to two crack addicts who are "cookers" in a crackhouse. The court thought that the long mandatory sentences were unnecessarily cruel in a case involving such small fish in the drug trade.

April 1994:
In Washington, DC, a kindergarten teacher discovers that one of her students—a five-year-old girl— has several vials of crack in her reading class. A week before, two 10-year-olds were taken into custody after authorities found crack in their book bags.

April 14, 1994:
Robert Lane, national president of the prestigious Concerned Black Men organization and a DC elections official is arrested on charges of purchasing crack cocaine. He had been smoking the drug four times a week since January.

May 1994:
Baseball star Darryl Strawberry heads back into rehab.

May 1994:
Jennifer Capriati is arrested for possession of weed, but the kid who was rolling to her hotel room in her car was loaded with rocks.

June 5, 1994:
Seven tons of cocaine are seized at a ranch in a small city in Northern Brazil, a record for a cocaine seizure.

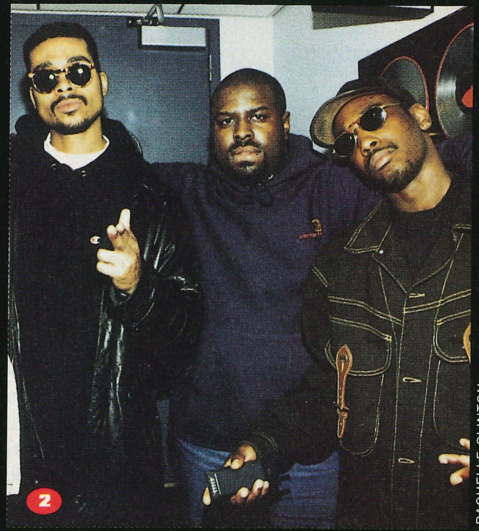
June 8, 1994:
Eighteen people are arrested in a raid on the Kenmore Hotel, a welfare hotel in NYC. Cops allege that the 23-story building had become "a supermarket for crack."

*RESEARCH: ROBERT PEAGLER AND DON JUEDES

coast 2 coast

1 NIKKI NICOLLE (RIGHT), PRODUCER OF SWEET SABLE'S SONG ON THE *ABOVE THE RIM*, AT A LISTENING PARTY FOR THE UP-AND-COMING MC, TRIPP (LEFT) **2** AL SKRATCH AND BIG ILL THE MACK WITH FUNKMASTER FLEX (MIDDLE) AT HIS RADIO SHOW ON HOT 97 IN NEW YORK **3** SMIF-N-WESSUN REPRESENTIN' B-TOWN AT A HOT 97 FUNCTION AT THE TUNNEL **4** ZHANE DOIN' THEIR GROOVE THANG FOR AN AIDS BENEFIT AT THE BOATHOUSE IN NEW YORK **5** PRINCE PAJA, ROSIE PEREZ, BOBBITO, TRACY WAPLES AND CED GEE UPTOWN AT THE NIKE 3 ON 3 BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT **6** DJ YOSHI, WINNER OF THE '93 SUPERMEN INC. JAPANESE DJ FINALS, AT WORK ON THE TOKYO TURNTABLES **7** MASTA ACE AND KURIOUS JORGE LAMPING AT THE BEASTIE BOYS ALBUM RELEASE PARTY IN NEW YORK **8** HEAVY D AND HIS LABEL CEO, ANDRE HARRELL, SHOWING NOTHING BUT LOVE FOR DICK CLARK AT HEAVY'S SWANKY PARTY IN CENTRAL PARK **9** LATER THAT NIGHT, HEAV ENJOYS A LITTLE MORE ATTRACTIVE COMPANY **10** TOO POETIC AND FRUITKWAN POSE AFTER REPRESENTIN' THE GRAVEDIGGAZ ON 98.7 KISS-FM **11** LIL' VICIOUS PARLAYS BACKSTAGE, PREPARING TO PERFORM HIS HITS "GLOCK" AND "FREAK" AT THE TUNNEL IN NYC

KOI SOJER



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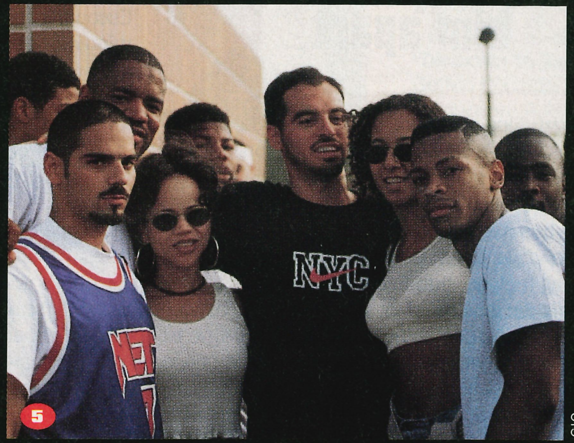

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THE RAP BANDIT

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT HIP-HOP BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK. . .

Q: Who are those monsters that were in the back of Luke on the cover of that issue? E.A. *Bronx, NY*
A: The Flintstones.

Q: Doesn't it seem that rap music from the mid-'80s is getting more play these days? L.C. *Albuquerque, NM*
A: Yes, the significance of that period in rap's history is now being properly recognized. Those were some unforgettable days. A time when people bought records not CDs, when a group like the Fat Boys could be popular, and when Rick Rubin saw more than one African-American during the course of a business day.

Q: Nigga you know that you wasn't ever in no motherfuckin' Naughty By Nature video Hip-Hop Hooray now was you? N.R.B. *Jamaica, NY*
A: Nigga you know that you wasn't ever in no motherfuckin' English class now was you?

Q: Who do you think will do more jail time, Tupac, Snoop or Favor Flav? N.A. *Ventnor, NJ*
A: And all three are presumed innocent until proven otherwise in a court of law. But hey, jail time ain't that bad, at least they're not facing six lashes from a rattan cane.

Q: Is Sticky Fingaz really an ex-gang member of the Decepticonz gang? R.G. *Bronx, NY*
A: You must be crazy, writing me a letter about gangs and using a pen with ink that color. I mean, I'm cool with blue, I'm cool with red, but mandarin orange is just too risky.

Q: Why does Snoop act hard, then wear his hair like a girl? I saw him on TV and he had the same exact 'do as my sister. E.S. *Fairfield, CA*
A: I'm not surprised, he already perfected the "waif" look.

Q: Shyheim attends high school in Staten Island. He goes to New Dorp. If he is, in fact, in the New Dorp zone, does he stay in the weakest part of Staten Island? L.M. *Clearwater, FL*
A: I thought we cleared all this up at the prom.

Q: I heard that Spice 1 is filming a movie soon. Is this true? D.B. *Lansing, MI*
A: Yes, there is much excitement surrounding the Spice 1 film project. Not over the script, everyone just wants to see who's gonna physically assault the Hughes brothers this year.

Q: Like Kris Kross, A Tribe Called Quest did a Sprite commercial. Do you consider them sellouts or smart businessmen? V.S. *Charleston, SC*
A: You still hung up on that old '80s idea that doing a commercial means you're a sellout? C'mon, get with it. You don't see anyone boycotting the music of Nike pitchman Humpty Hump. They're not buying it, but they're not boycotting it.

Q: Do we call ourselves "dog" because we still consider ourselves animals? J.M. *Elmwood, CA*
A: Women are always calling men dogs, and scholars are always reminding us that we're animals. I say we attack and eliminate these institutional injustices, just like we did with the racist, anglo-saxon "f" previously used to spell the word "phat."

Q: I was not fortunate enough to get tickets to THE SOURCE Awards, held on April 25 at the Paramount Theater. Was the event videotaped so that dedicated fans like myself who weren't there can savor this historic moment in hip-hop? B.W. *Jamesburg, NJ*
A: Unfortunately, a videotape will not be available to the public, unlike other WWF events.

ILLUSTRATION BY TODD JAMES

GOT A BURNING QUESTION ABOUT HIP-HOP? SEND IT TO:

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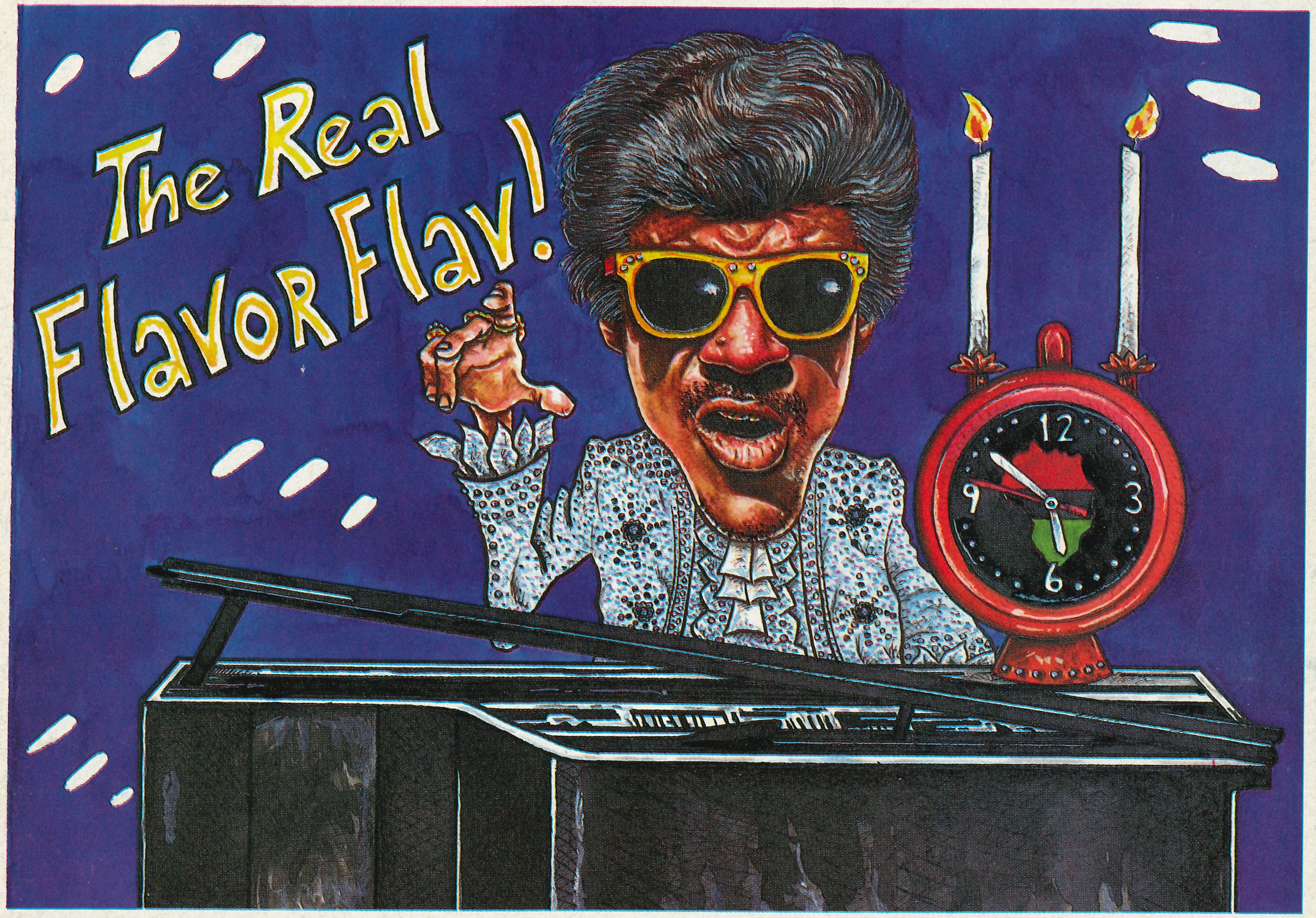
THE LAST WORD

BY ANDRE LEROY DAVIS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Flavor Flav!

COMIN' AT YA IN SEPTEMBER

THE 10TH SUMMER OF CRACK (PART THREE):

There's one more installment left in our look back at the first ten years of the rock cocaine epidemic. Part Three will feature the second part of our exclusive interview with Ramon Milian-Rodriguez, as well as articles about drug rehab and crack babies. And don't worry: we still got a few surprises up our sleeves.

BEATNUTS:

Emerging from Queens in a drunken and blunted stupor, the world's famous Beatnuts have returned with another album of goodies for that ass. As usual, the beats are dusted and the rhymes are lust-filled, party boasting—but skills are shown regardless. We'll hang in the studio with Psycho Les, Fashion and Ju Ju to learn the secrets that earned them props over here.

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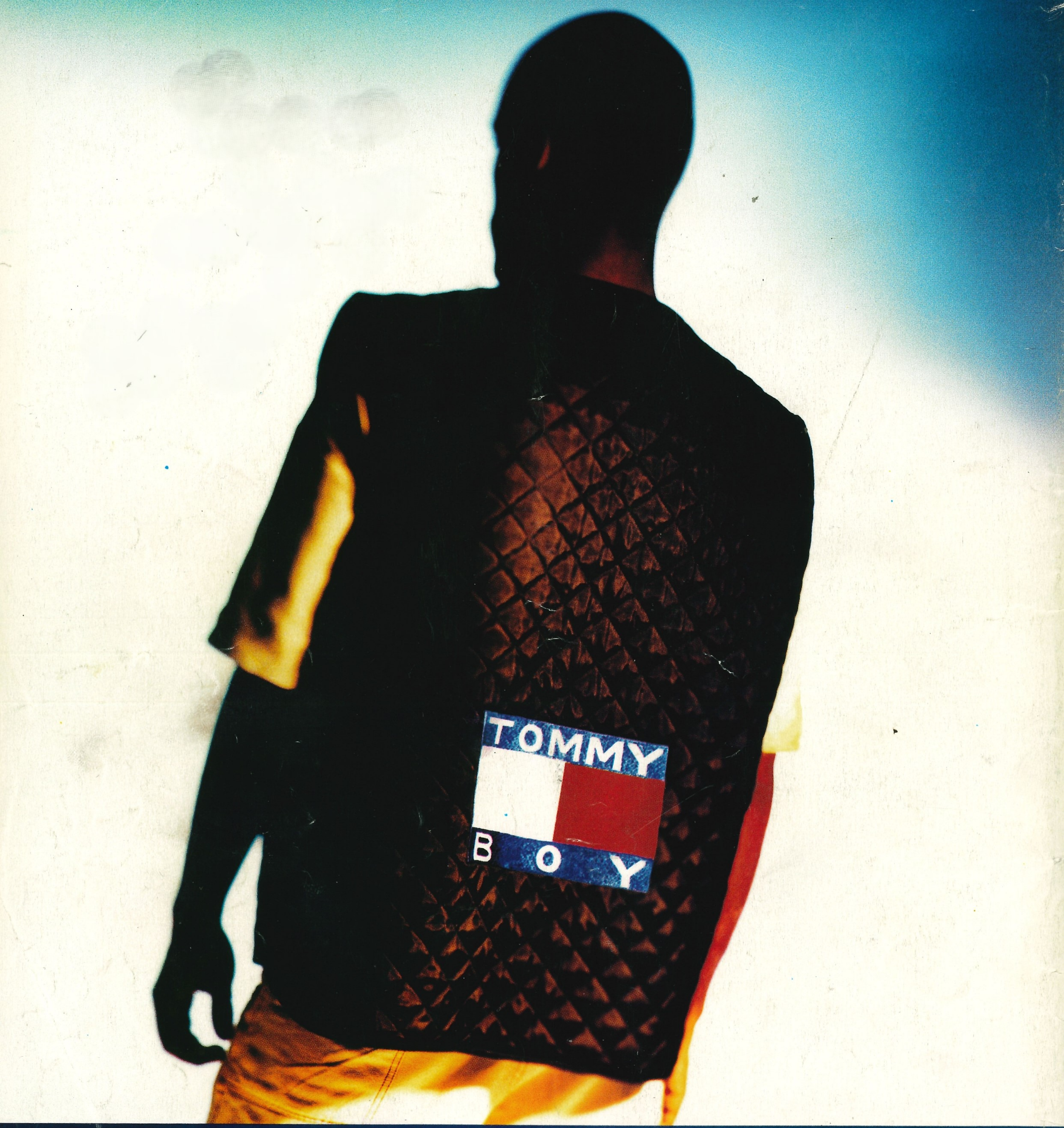

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